INDIAN INSIGHTS:

BUDDHISM, BRAHMANISM AND BHAKTI

Papers from the Annual Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions

EDITED BY

PETER CONNOLLY

and

SUE HAMILTON

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Preface

The essays in this volume were all originally presented at the Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions (formerly the Symposium on Indian Religions) held annually in spring in Oxford, England. This volume, which consists of papers given between 1989 and 1994, is the fifth generated by the annual Symposium. The previous volumes have been: *Perspectives on Indian Religion: papers in honour of Karel Werner*, edited by Peter Connolly and published in 1986 by Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi; *The Yogi and the Mystic* (1990), *Symbols in Art and Religion* (1990), and *Love Divine: Studies in Bhakti and Devotional Mysticism* (1993), all edited by Karel Werner and published by Curzon Press, London, as part of their Durham Indological Series.

The Symposium on Indian Religions was convened for the first time in 1975 by Dr. Karel Werner, who was then Spalding Lecturer in Indian Religions at the University of Durham. The original intention was to provide an annual forum for scholars working and teaching in a subject the nature of which which often placed them in institutions with no close colleagues with whom to exchange ideas. From the beginning the Symposium answered a real need. And though the subject has expanded over recent years, and conferences and seminars have proliferated and provided other opportunities for interacting with colleagues within the discipline, the annual Symposium remains the only regular forum. Its on-going success in combining amenable informality with a useful opportunity to share scholarly work (completed or in progress) with others in the field has long been acknowledged and taken advantage of. Over the years, it has attracted scholars and graduate students with an interest in Indian and Indian-derived religions from all over Britain and many other countries, including Australia, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Sri Lanka and the United States of America. While some have attended only occasionally, others are committed regulars.

Aspects of Hinduism – from Brahmanical orthodoxy to localised sectarian practices, Buddhism – in many of its different forms, Jainism and Sikhism have all been explored from the perspectives of disciplines as diverse as anthropology, philosophy, psychology, religious education and

textual analysis. The structure of the symposium is such that each paper can be discussed at length by participants, a process which offers the author an opportunity to benefit from informed comment before proceeding to publication or further presentations.

Reflecting the diversity of topics addressed in the symposia themselves, the present collection focuses on the Hindu-Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions in a variety of manifestations. The volume is organised thematically, essays having been arranged in pairs where each contribution can be regarded as complementary to its partner. The studies by Dermot Killingley and Peter Connolly are both concerned with Upaniṣadic ideas and their relation to other aspects of Vedic material. Dr. Killingley discusses the possible continuity between Vedic eschatology and the doctrine of rebirth as presented in the *Upaniṣads*, whereas Dr Connolly suggests that on the subject of *prāṇa* Vedāntic exegetes have misinterpreted their primary sources. Mark Allon and Sally Mellick-Cutler focus primarily on the textual tradition of Pali Buddhism. The former concentrates on the implications of patterns and structures in key sections of the earliest stratum of canonical texts, relating them to their oral transmission, and the latter draws on a wide range of canonical and non-canonical material to discuss the theme of the Buddha's bad karma. Lynn Thomas and David Smith both explore mythological dimensions of the Hindu tradition through literature and art. The contributions of Anthony Tribe and Rob Mayer deal with Mahāyāna Buddhist material: the former through the analysis of a text that was influential in both India and Tibet; the latter through investigating Indian antecedents for a practice that is often regarded as distinctive of Tibetan Buddhism.

The final pair of essays on Hindu-Brahmanical themes focus on the south Indian state of Kerala. That by Theodore Gabriel explores the life and teachings of Nārāyaṇa Guru, one of its most outstanding religious figures, while Gavin Flood vividly describes and offers an interpretation of 'the dancing of the *teyyams*', one of Kerala's most dramatic religious rituals. The collection concludes with two essays on aspects of Buddhism in south-east Asia about which little is generally known. In exploring the features and origins of 'esoteric' Buddhism in the Theravāda countries of the region, L. S. Cousins' study demonstrates that there is far more diversity within Theravāda Buddhism than is usually acknowledged. Hiroko Kawanami's essay addresses the position of nuns in contemporary Burmese Buddhism. She suggests that their position is one of 'transition' between the historical ambiguities surrounding the status of nuns in the past and their defining a new more respectable and stable religiosity for themselves in the future.

Overall this collection offers a wide-ranging yet thematically coherent exploration of many facets of the Indian religious heritage. And in drawing on sources as diverse as classical texts and contemporary fieldwork, the

essays demonstrate both the perennial interest the ancient material commands and also the way the religious traditions they engendered are adapting to the modern world. As such the volume should be of value to all scholars and students with an interest in Indian and Indian-derived religious thought and practice.

All the contributions are published here for the first time and thus constitute a substantial body of original research. Many of the contributors are regular participants at the annual Spalding Symposium, so readers attending future meetings may be able to explore issues raised in this volume with the authors themselves. Details of future symposia can be obtained from Peter Connolly through Luzac Oriental.

Sue Hamilton and
Peter Connolly
October 1996

The Paths of the Dead and the Five Fires

Dermot Killingley, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Introduction

The passage known as the doctrine of the five fires (*pañcāgni-vidyā*), which occurs in two versions in the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, is often cited as an early statement of the contrasting ideas of rebirth according to one's actions, and salvation.[1] It does indeed refer to rebirth, and in the *ChUp* version, though not in the *BṛhUp* version, this is related to a person's previous actions; both versions also contrast rebirth with the world of Brahman. These features of the passage fit well with the ideas of karman, rebirth and salvation; but they should not blind us to other features which link it to older ideas, and which may help us partially to trace the origins of the passage itself.

It is commonly asserted that belief in rebirth is not of Āryan origin, and it is often attributed to non-Āryan, or specifically Dravidian sources with which the Vedic Āryans were in contact. The evidence for this, when it is offered at all, seems to be that rebirth appears suddenly and without precedent in the history of Vedic literature. A typical, and perhaps seminal, expression of this view is Richard Garbe's 1921 encyclopedia article "Transmigration (Indian)":

> suddenly and without any transitional stages that we can perceive, the Indian people was seized by the oppressive belief in transmigration ... the theory, as it meets us for the first time in the literature, appears already fully formed in the shape of belief in a permanently continued but ever-changing existence.[2]

A more recent writer, who sees the doctrine of the five fires as one of "several very ancient folk explanations of the mechanism of rebirth",[3] argues:

> The *Upaniṣads* and Buddhism have basically identical ideas on rebirth... This similarity, coupled with the absence of a *Vedic karma*-rebirth doctrine,

> suggests that the *Upaniṣadic* and Buddhist doctrines may be diverging interpretations of a common, non-*Vedic* rebirth tradition.[4]

Vedic to this writer seems to refer only to the hymns of the *ṚV*; he does not count the *Upaniṣads* as part of the *Veda*, and he seems unaware of the *Brāhmaṇas*. This attitude is all too common, and makes it possible to exaggerate the revolutionary nature of the *Upaniṣads*.

The view which this quotation represents also oversimplifies what is said about life after death in the Vedic hymns. The same writer says:

> The afterlife belief in the *Ṛg Veda* is simply that after death, the soul leaves the body and enters heaven or hell or eternity.[5]

This statement ignores the great variety of Vedic thought on life after death, both in the hymns and in later Vedic literature. The main way in which Vedic thought on the subject differs from later Hindu thought is that it usually regards life after death as something to be achieved, rather than as something to be escaped from. But this achievement is thought of in several ways.

Firstly, one can become immortal through one's offspring: "O Agni, may I reach immortality with offspring" (*ṚV* 5, 4, 10; cf. *ṚV* 6, 70, 3). Immortality through offspring appears in one of the many accounts of how the creator god Prajāpati, who is also the primordial sacrificer and father, reproduced himself by creating the cosmos. This particular account occurs in the context of the Agnihotra, the offering at sunrise and sunset. After desiring to reproduce himself, Prajāpati first produces Agni (fire), but is afraid that Agni will devour him. He then produces milk and butter, plants, and the ritual sound *svāhā*; with these he performs offerings and turns away Agni, who is also Death.

> And indeed, anyone who, knowing this, offers the Agnihotra, reproduces himself with offspring even as Prajāpati reproduced himself, and saves himself from Agni, Death, when he is about to devour him (*ŚBr* 2, 2, 4, 7).

The idea that a man survives after death in his offspring is used in *AiUp* 4, 3-4 (to be discussed below). It is also mentioned in *BṛhUp* 3, 9, 28, though only to be rejected.

A second idea is survival through dispersal of the person into the corresponding parts of the universe (cf. *ṚV* 10, 58):

> May your eye go to the sun, your breath to the wind; go to the sky and to the earth in due order. Or go to the waters, if that has been ordained for you; take your stand in plants, with your body (*ṚV* 10, 16, 3).

Dispersal is not thought of as destruction here; it is prayed for as something of benefit to the deceased. It appears as a reward of knowledge in *ŚBr* 10, 3, 3, 8:

> And when he who knows this passes away from this world, he passes into fire with his speech, into the sun with his eye, into the moon with his mind, into the directions with his ear, and into the wind with his breath. Being made of them, he becomes whichever of these deities he chooses, and is at rest.

The dialogue of Yājñavalkya and Artabhāga (*BṛhUp* 3, 2, 13), which is well known as an early instance of the idea of deeds determining the fate of a person after death, begins with a similar account of dispersal, in which the number of items is expanded, and dispersal seems to be the common lot rather than a particular achievement.

Thirdly, there is the idea of survival in one's deeds, particularly ritual deeds (*iṣṭāpūrta*), which prepare a place for the deceased in the next world:

> Join with the Fathers, with Yama, with your sacrifices and good works (*iṣṭāpūrta*) in the highest heaven. Leaving faults behind, return home; join your body with strength (*ṚV* 10, 14, 8).

The phrase "world of good deeds" (*sukṛtasya loka-* *AV* 6, 119, 1; *AV* 6, 120, 1; *AV* 6, 121, 1), though it need not have originally referred to a state after death, can be mentioned here. It appears in *MuUp* 1, 2, 1, and in *KaUp* 3, 1; a similar idea is expressed in *MuUp* 1, 2, 6, where a man's offerings carry him to the world of Brahman which consists of his good deeds (*sukṛto brahma-lokaḥ*).[6] Yājñavalkya uses the idea of survival after death in or through one's deeds, in a passage that is often cited as a landmark in the history of karman (*BṛhUp* 3, 2, 13); he is drawing on an ancient idea.

Let us now turn back to the passage we started with, and examine its Vedic antecedents. The passage exists in two versions, in *BṛhUp* 6, 2, and *ChUp* 5, 3–5, 10. The *ChUp* version is longer, and contains ideas about karman as the determinant of rebirth which are completely absent from the *BṛhUp* version. In some respects, therefore, the *BṛhUp* version seems more primitive; but it does not appear that the *ChUp* is simply a reworking of it. Since each contains some material that is not in the other, it is more probable that each is a reworking of a lost common source. In examining these two versions, we can take *BṛhUp* 6, 2 as our starting point and note where *ChUp* 5, 3-10 is different.

Story

Like many doctrinal passages in the early prose *Upaniṣads*, the passage in both versions is introduced by a story which relates the occasion on which the doctrine was taught. This frame story is one in which Gautama Āruṇi, the father of Śvetaketu, is instructed by a *kṣatriya*, Pravāhaṇa Jaibali, after the latter has asked the son a series of five questions which neither the son nor the father is able to answer. It appears in two versions: *BṛhUp* 6, 2, 1-8;

and *ChUp* 5, 3. A similar story occurs as *KauUp* 1, 1; here, however, the teacher's name is different, and there is no indication that he is a *kṣatriya*. Further, this story does not mention the five questions. Renate Söhnen has argued, through a detailed internal examination of all three stories, that *KauUp* 1, 1 is the earliest version of the frame story, and not a reworking of the other two as has often been supposed.[7] However, it is possible that the history of the doctrine is partly independent of the history of the story, so that even if *KauUp* 1, 1 is the oldest extant version of the story, the doctrine taught in the remainder of *KauUp* 1 need not for that reason be older than the doctrine in *BṛhUp* 6, 2, 9-15 and *ChUp* 5, 4-10. In fact, *KauUp* 1 differs from the other two in its doctrine as well as in its story: the five fires are not mentioned, and the paths of the dead are substantially different. Since it is with the history of doctrine that we are concerned here, we shall concentrate on *BṛhUp* 6, 2 and *ChUp* 5, 3-10, treating *KauUp* 1 as a related text rather than as a version of the same text.

Some modern interpreters attach great significance to the motif of the *kṣatriya* teacher.[8] Not only did Vivekānanda claim that all the important ideas in the *Upaniṣads* came from *kṣatriyas* – and he claimed to be a *kṣatriya* himself – but others have tried to show from such passages that the doctrine of rebirth came from *kṣatriyas*, who had it from non-Āryans, with whom it is assumed that the *kṣatriyas* were in more intimate communication than the Brahmins were. Those who speculate about *kṣatriya* teachers tend to exaggerate their frequency in the *Upaniṣads*, and to underestimate the great variety of views, some of which could be of non-Āryan origin, which are recorded as being taught by Brahmins; they also ignore the fact that *kṣatriyas* play a part in the theological discussions (*brahmodya*) in the *Brāhmaṇas*.[9] It has been suggested that the motif of the *kṣatriya* teacher in this and other passages points to the novelty of its ideas in Brahmin circles, rather than to a specifically *kṣatriya* origin.[10] Rather than speculate on this point, we shall look here at the texts and their antecedents, taking the *kṣatriya* teacher as a literary motif rather than a matter of historical record.

Another point to note is that the learner in this story appears as the teacher in another well-known *Upaniṣadic* story, *ChUp* 6, where he instructs his son Śvetaketu, who has a role also in the present story. This is not the only occasion in which the teacher in one story is the learner in another: the great Yājñavalkya, the teacher of Janaka king of Videha in *BṛhUp* 3-4 and an authority on ritual in much of the *ŚBr*, appears as learner in *ŚBr* 11, 2, 1, and in the same passage Janaka, a *kṣatriya*, is the teacher. But the attribution of a teaching to a particular teacher need not be historical. We will return to *ŚBr* 11, 2, 1 later.

The general outline of the frame story which introduces the doctrine of the five fires is a recurrent one, in which received learning is found to be inadequate, and new teaching is sought. Śvetaketu has been taught by his father – whether in the way recorded in *ChUp* 6 we need not inquire.

Despite his father's teaching, he is unable to answer five questions put to him by a *kṣatriya*, Pravāhaṇa Jaibali of the Pañcālas. The questions, in the *BṛhUp* version, are:

> Do you know how these creatures go different ways when they depart?...
>
> Do you know how they return to this world?...
>
> Do you know how the other world is not filled up by the many who keep on going there?...
>
> Do you know at the offering of which oblation does water acquire a human voice, rise up and speak?...
>
> Do you know the way to the path of the gods or of the ancestors?
>
> (*BṛhUp* 6, 2, 2).

The first three questions are clearly about the dead; the fourth is a riddle whose meaning only becomes clear when it is answered later in the story. The last question need not be about the dead, but the answer shows that it is. The *ChUp* version has similar questions, but in a different order, the riddling one being the last.

Śvetaketu knows none of the answers. He goes back to his father, and complains that his father's instruction has not enabled him to answer these questions put by a *kṣatriya.* Gautama goes to Pravāhaṇa and asks for an answer to the questions. At this point the *BṛhUp* is more elaborate than the *ChUp*, but both versions include the motif of the questioner refusing the offer of material goods and insisting on his question – a motif that recurs in *KaUp* 1, 21–29, and whose message is that material goods are finite, but knowledge is, as Gautama puts it, "abundant, infinite, boundless". Pravāhaṇa agrees to give him the knowledge which, he says, has not dwelt before in any Brahmin.

The teaching which follows is in two parts, which I shall call "the Five Fires pericope" and "the Two Paths pericope".[11] The frame story, as in several other *Upaniṣad* passages, disappears from view once the teaching starts. It is not alluded to again in the *BṛhUp* version; but the *ChUp* version alludes to two of the five questions: how water speaks (*ChUp* 5, 10, 1) and how the other world is not filled up (*ChUp* 5, 10, 8).

The Five Fires pericope

The Five Fires pericope follows a pattern, which is repeated five times in the *ChUp* version and six in the *BṛhUp* version. In each occurrence of the pattern, a part of the cosmos is called a fire, something is offered in it, and something else is produced. The product of each fire becomes the offering in the next:

Offering	*Fire*	*Product*
faith (*śraddhā*)	other world	soma
soma	rain-cloud (*parjanya*)	rain
rain	earth	food
food	man	semen
semen	woman	man (*BṛhUp*)/embryo (*ChUp*)

Each fire is analysed into five parts: fuel, smoke, flame, embers, sparks. Each of these parts is identified with some part or aspect of whatever is represented by the fire; the details vary somewhat between the two versions. The pattern is thus fivefold, and is five times repeated; the *BṛhUp* version adds a sixth fire, which will be discussed below.

The motif of analysing a phenomenon by identifying parts or aspects of it with parts of the ritual is a common one: for instance, *ChUp* 2, 13 analyses the sexual act in this way, and *BṛhUp* 6, 4, 3 similarly analyses the sexual parts of a woman; both passages are similar to the description of woman as a fire in the Five Fires pericope. *BṛhUp* 6, 4, 3, like our passage, uses the fivefold motif, being one of a series of such analyses based on the five sections of the *Sāmavedic* chant. The fivefold analysis, with reference to ritual, indicates completeness: there are five sections to the chant, five layers of bricks and five layers of stones in the great fireplace described in the *ŚBr*. There are five kinds of bloodless offering (*TS* 6, 5, 11), and five species of sacrificial beast: man, horse, cow, sheep, goat (*ŚBr* 1, 2, 3, 6; *AV* 11, 2, 9). Outside the purely ritual sphere, there are five seasons (*ŚBr* 11, 7, 4, 4), and, let us not forget, five fingers (*ŚBr* 1, 1, 2, 16), which may be the natural basis for the whole system of counting in fives.[12] The number five features also in many cosmological and anthropological formulae – of which the Sāṃkhya system is a relatively late example whose origins can be traced in the *Veda*. Perhaps the five *khandhas* are another. The significance of the number five in the *Veda* is summed up at the end of a well-known cosmogonic passage:

> The sacrifice is fivefold. The beast is fivefold. Man is fivefold. This whole world, whatever there is, is fivefold. So he who knows this obtains the whole world (*BṛhUp* 1, 4, 17).

The *BṛhUp* version, again introducing a feature which is not in the *ChUp* version, adds a sixth fire to the five: the actual fire in which man is cremated. In this fire, the offering is the deceased man, and the product is "a man of the colour of light" (*puruṣo bhāsvara-varṇaḥ*); that is, the man in a post-mortem state achieved through the ritual process of cremation. The addition of a sixth fire does not seriously break the pattern of five, since the sixth fire is fire itself. Similarly there are fifteen digits of the moon, and the moon is the sixteenth.[13] The passage quoted above, *BṛhUp* 1, 4, 17, demonstrates

the fivefoldness of man by first listing five parts: mind, voice, breath, eye, ear, and then adding a sixth part, the self (*ātman*).

To return to the five fires of our passage, they clearly represent a series of processes by which life comes to birth. The first process, being heavenly, is a little obscure, but it seems to mean that life originates, as it well might in Vedic thought, with an act of the gods; the input of this process, represented as the offering, is faith (*śraddhā*, an essential element of any Vedic ritual, comprising confidence in its efficacity and a determination to perform it properly). The output is the nourishing fluid of the universe, soma. This becomes the input of the second process, which produces rain from the cloud. The third process is the production of food grains from the earth when nourished by rain. The fourth is the eating of food by man, leading to the production of semen which is the concentrated essence of food; the fifth is sexual intercourse leading to conception. Frauwallner[14] sees this as a doctrine arising from a basic fact, "the living force of Water ... everything being clothed in the secret language of the sacrificial mystique." This attempt to treat Vedic thought as prescientific science ignores the fact that the starting-point of the process is not water but faith. Such an attempt may help us initially to understand Vedic thought, but is at best a partial way of interpreting it. To understand it fully, we must appreciate that ritual is not just a clothing for the ideas, but their very basis.

The Two Paths pericope

The Two Paths pericope is structured round the well-known opposition between village and forest. The village is the ordered space in which agriculture is practised, social relations operate, families are raised and rituals can take place; while the forest is the natural, unordered space in which plants and animals grow wild, social relations are renounced and rituals are performed only mentally. The general sense of the Two Paths pericope is that the life of the forest leads to Brahman, through the path of the gods; the life of the village leads back to this world, through the path of the ancestors.

The *BṛhUp* version uses the theme of the sixth fire as a bridge passage, linking the Five Fires pericope to the Two Paths pericope by introducing the subject of death. Both versions introduce the first of the two paths by making it the reward of those who know the five fires (and, in the *BṛhUp* version, the sixth fire). The theme of the reward of a particular piece of knowledge is of course common in the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*, but it is treated here at greater length than usual. The reward belongs both to those who know the fires and to those who perform *upāsana* of *śraddhā* ('faith') as *satya* ('truth') (*BṛhUp* version) or as *tapas* ('heat; asceticism') (*ChUp* version). *Upāsana* and the verb *upās* are both often translated 'worship', but this is

inadequate. *Upāsana* is a mental operation in which something is identified with something else, often more remote and less easy to know; for instance:

> The Man in the sun – I meditate on (*upās*) him as Brahman (*BṛhUp* 2, 1, 2).[15]

The verb *upās* regularly takes two accusatives (a direct object and an object complement), so in our text *śraddhāṃ satyam upāsate* (*BṛhUp* 6, 2, 15) may be translated as "meditate on faith by identifying it with truth" or "meditate on faith as truth".[16] *Satya* ('truth') and *śraddhā* ('faith') make a pair in Vedic ritual thought: truth, which means that no untruth must be uttered by those who take part in ritual, and faith, the confidence that the ritual will have the effect promised by the *Veda*. As essential though non-material elements of the ritual, they can take the place of the *yajamāna* and his wife if he has no wife (*AiBr* 7, 10), or the offering and the fire if no materials for offerings are available (*ŚBr* 11, 3, 1, 4).[17] They thus enable a man living in the forest to continue his ritual life without performing actual rituals.

In the *ChUp* version, the forest-dwellers meditate on faith not as truth but as asceticism (*tapas*).[18]

In the *BṛhUp* version, the path of the ancestors is won by those who win worlds by means of sacrifice, giving and *tapas*. In the *ChUp* version, which has already used *tapas* as part of the entrance to the path of the gods, the path of the ancestors is won by those who *upās* sacrifices and good works (*iṣṭāpūrta*) as giving. This may be only a way of saying that they practise both *iṣṭāpūrta* and giving, the reference to *upāsana* being only a device to create a superficial parallel of wording with the entrance to the path of the gods.

Each of the two ways is described in a series of stages. The two versions agree, except for some differences in the middle stages of each of the ways.

Path of the gods:

BṛhUp:	flame	day	bright fortnight[19]	uttarāyaṇa[20]	deva-loka[21]	sun		lightning	Brahman
ChUp:	flame	day	bright fortnight	uttarāyaṇa	year	sun	moon	lightning	Brahman

Path of the ancestors:

BṛhUp:	smoke	night	dark fortnight	dakṣiṇāyana	pitṛ-loka[22]		moon
ChUp:	smoke	night	dark fortnight	dakṣiṇāyana	pitṛ-loka	space	moon

The path of the ancestors leads to the moon, which has ancient associations with immortality, the ancestors, and soma.[23] The inclusion of the moon in the path of the gods in the *ChUp* version is therefore anomalous. However, the path of the ancestors continues beyond the moon:

BṛhUp:	space	wind				rain	earth		(man	woman – Kāṇva text only)
ChUp:	space	wind	smoke	mist	cloud	rain	plants	food	semen	

The differences are not really significant; both versions agree in describing a series leading from cremation to the eating of food and the conception of a new person. Here, the *ChUp* version raises a problem which is ignored by the *BṛhUp* version: what ensures that the plant is eaten by a man? This problem is introduced as follows:

> It is difficult to escape from [the plant stage]. For whoever eats the food, and whoever emits semen, that is what he becomes again (*ChUp* 5, 10, 6).[24]

It is at this point that the *ChUp* introduces karman as the deciding factor, which is absent from the *BṛhUp* version.

After describing the path of the ancestors, both versions add a third path, not mentioned before, leading to low forms of life; we are not told at which point this path separates from the others. It is mentioned only very briefly, and without any reference to ritual or other traditional concepts, so that its inclusion looks like an afterthought. The *ChUp* also adds some details on specific forms of high and low rebirth to its account of the path of the ancestors (*ChUp* 5, 10, 7), and a verse listing four specific sins (*ChUp* 5, 10, 9).

The questions in the frame story have now been answered, although they are not mentioned again except when *ChUp* 5, 10, 9 says that this is how water gets a human voice at the fifth offering, and why the other world is not filled up.

Parallels to the Five Fires pericope

Each of the two pericopes has parallels elsewhere in Vedic literature, which may throw light on its origin, and therefore on the origin of the whole passage as it stands in *BṛhUp* and *ChUp*. First, the Five Fires pericope has a parallel in *ŚBr* 11, 6, 2, the story already mentioned in which Janaka king of Videha instructs Yājñavalkya. Again we have the theme of a *kṣatriya* teacher who answers questions which a Brahmin is unable to answer. Incidentally, at the end of the story Yājñavalkya grants Janaka a boon, and Janaka chooses the privilege of asking Yājñavalkya questions (to which, it appears, Yājñavalkya is obliged to give answers); this is the boon mentioned in *BṛhUp* 4, 3, 1. The story also says that Janaka was thenceforth a Brahmin.

Janaka challenges a group of travelling Brahmins by asking each of them to explain the *agnihotra* (the daily ritual at sunrise and sunset). Yājñavalkya gives the explanation which most pleases the king. The king, after giving him the usual thousand cows (here perhaps only a verbal compliment), says that even Yājñavalkya does not know the uprising (*utkrānti*), destination (*gati*), foundation (*pratiṣṭhā*), satisfaction (*tṛpti*), return (*punar-āvṛtti*), and world that rises again (*lokaṃ pratyutthāyinam*) of the *agnihotra* ritual. Yājñavalkya,

after advising his companions not to engage in debate with Janaka in case it comes to be known that a *kṣatriya* has out-talked Brahmins, ignores his own advice by leaving them and driving after Janaka to ask him for his explanation of the *agnihotra*. The king says that the two *agnihotras* rise to the atmosphere, rise thence to the sky, return to the earth, rise up and enter man, rise up and enter woman. The dual forms of the verbs make it clear that the subject throughout is the two *agnihotras*. In each of these stages, Janaka names a fire, fuel, and a pure offering (*śukram āhutim*). The pattern is similar to that of the two passages we have examined; a series of processes, described in terms of the sacrificial fire, leads to the production of food from the earth, its ingestion by man, and the production of semen.

fire:	atmosphere	sky	earth	man's mouth	woman's genitals
fuel:	wind	sun	fire	man's tongue	womb
offering:	sun-motes	moon	plants	food	semen

(*ŚBr* 11, 6, 2).

The points promised by Janaka are not all explicitly answered; but the *agnihotras* are four times said to 'rise up', five times to 'satisfy' (the object in each instance being the 'fire'), and once to 'return'. As in the *BṛhUp* and *ChUp* passages, the first three fires are related to the three parts of the Vedic cosmos, heaven, atmosphere and earth, though this time the position of the first two is reversed; the fourth fire is related to the process of eating, and the fifth to sexual reproduction. The son who is born is said to be the 'world that rises again' (*lokaṃ pratyutthāyinam*) of the *agnihotras*, and it is added that for him who eats or has sexual intercourse knowing this, the *agnihotra* is offered. This seems to mean that the *yajamāna* is reborn in his son, and that the full benefits of the *agnihotra* accrue to those who have the knowledge of this doctrine of five fires, perhaps even if they do not perform the *agnihotra* ritual – a similar idea to the better-known *prāṇāgnihotra*.[25]

A similar passage, again in the context of the *agnihotra*, is in the *Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa*. Here too we have a series of fires; in this case, each of them is identified with Agni Vaiśvānara.

offering:	amṛta, water	soma	rain	food	semen	man
fire:	sun	thunder	earth	man	woman	fire
product:	soma	rain	food	semen	man	man

(*JaiBr* 1, 45-6).[26]

We are much closer here to *BṛhUp* 6, 2 and *ChUp* 5, 3-10. As in those passages, each fire is given a product, which (except for the last) becomes the offering in the next fire. Though the *JaiBr* passage is concerned with the *agnihotra*, there is no reference to an actual *agnihotra* or a human *yajamāna*; the sacrifice is a heavenly one, performed by the gods. We are told that "at the fifth creation the divine waters speak with a human voice"; and here this is more clearly apposite than in the *BṛhUp* and *ChUp* passages,

because the initial offering is here not 'faith' but 'immortality (*amṛta*), water (*āpaḥ*)', apparently in apposition.[27] A sixth fire, the cremation fire, is introduced, and the passage culminates in an account of what happens after death. This account even has something in common with the Two Paths pericope, in that from the smoke of the cremation fire the dead man goes to night, then to day, then to the dark fortnight, then to the bright fortnight; here, however, night and day, and the two fortnights, are stages in a single path, not in two separate paths. The man is asked a series of questions, the answers to which act as passwords to successive stages of the path; this motif appears in *KauUp* 1, which we will look at later.

The theme of the 'world that rises again' in *ŚBr* 11, 6, 2 is echoed here, in the phrase "world for rising again" (*lokaḥ punar-utthāyai*); but this refers to the goal reached by the man in his post-mortem state, who is the product of the sixth or cremation fire, whereas in the *ŚBr* passage the "world that rises again" (*lokaṃ pratyutthāyinam*) is the product of the fifth fire. The concern of the *JaiBr* passage, therefore, is not with gaining the full benefits of the *agnihotra*, but explicitly with gaining a place in the other world after death.[28]

We now know something of the history of the Five Fires pericope before it came to the ears of the redactor of the common source from which *BṛhUp* 6, 2 and *ChUp* 5, 3-10 are derived. This pericope existed in at least two versions, which have come down to us as *ŚBr* 11, 6, 2 and *JaiBr* I, 45-6. Our redactor has developed it further by taking from the *ŚBr* version the motif of the *kṣatriya*'s questions, which he uses in his frame story, and from the *JaiBr* version the concern with life after death. He has taken from *JaiBr* I, 45-6 the role of the gods as performers of the five sacrifices, and the location of the process in the other world (*asau lokaḥ*); whereas in *ŚBr* 11, 6, 2 the subject is the *agnihotra* which takes place in this world and is the work of a human *yajamāna*. He has also taken the motif of the sixth fire from the *JaiBr* version; although this sixth fire is mentioned explicitly only in the *BṛhUp* version, the *ChUp* version implies it by linking the cremation fire to the five fires in the following statement:

> When he dies at his appointed time, they take him to the same fire from which he came, from which he came into being (*ChUp* 5, 9, 2).

That is, after coming into being from five symbolic fires, he returns to an actual fire.

This linking of cremation with birth recalls passages in which cremation is said to be a birth, e.g.:

> Having performed an offering, Prajāpati procreated, and rescued himself from Agni, Death, who was about to eat him. And indeed, whoever knowing this offers the agnihotra, procreates the same offspring as Prajāpati procreated,[29] and rescues himself from Agni, Death, who is about to eat him.

> And when he dies, and when they place him on the fire, then he is born out of the fire, and the fire burns only his body. So, just as he is born from his father or mother, so is he born from the fire (*ŚBr* 2, 2, 4, 7-8).

Thus, those who perform *agnihotra* with this knowledge escape death in two ways: through the *agnihotra*, and through cremation.

Counting these two as births in addition to their natural birth, the performer of the *agnihotra* could be said to have three births. Though this point is not made in the above passage, a similar point is made in another passage of the same *Brāhmaṇa*. Here, three births are enumerated: natural birth, the sacrifice, and cremation:

> A man is born three times. Thus: first he is born from his mother and father; then when one who has a sacrifice coming has the sacrifice performed, he is born a second time; and when he dies and they place him on the fire, and when he comes into existence from that, he is born again. That is why they say a man is born three times (*ŚBr* 11, 2, 1, 1).

The topic of three births appears again in the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*. Here, as throughout this *Upaniṣad*, the subject is the *ātman*. The account starts with the formation of semen and its emission in a woman (*AiUp* 2, 1). In accordance with the male-dominated view of procreation which permeates the *Vedas*, this is the *ātman*'s first birth. The second is the actual birth (*AiUp* 2, 3). The *ātman* of the offspring (assumed to be male) is spoken of in relation to the father, who in prospering it is prospering his own self (*AiUp* 2, 3). Underlying the passage is the idea that a son is a continuation of his father; which implies that while both are alive the father has two selves.

> This self of his is appointed as a deputy for good actions. Now his other self, having done what he had to do, comes to the end of his lifespan and passes away. Even as he is passing away from hence, he is born again. This is his third birth (*AiUp* 2, 4).

This third birth stands for death: specifically, the death of a man who has a son. The passage ends by saying that the sage Vāmadeva, by knowing this, became immortal at his death, and obtained all desires in heaven (*AiUp* 2, 5-6). The implication is that if a man has a son to continue his good actions (*puṇya karman*) – ritual actions are no doubt meant – his death is like a birth into the other world.

This idea of death as a birth, or cremation as a birth, is taken up by the redactor as a link between the five fires and the topic of rebirth.

Before leaving the topic of the five fires, we can look at other passages which share with it the idea of a series of processes leading to the formation of life. For the sake of comparison with the Five Fires pericope, they are tabulated here alongside *BṛhUp* 6, 2.

BṛhUp 6, 2:	faith				soma	rain			food	semen	man
TaiUp 2, 1:	Self	space	wind	fire		water	earth	plants	food		man
MuUp 2, 1, 5:	Man			fire	soma	water	earth[30]	plants	food	semen	offspring
ChUp 6, 2-5:	Being			heat		water			food		man

These texts are less closely related to our passage than are those which mention five fires. However, the correspondences between them and the Five Fires pericope show that we are dealing with a recurrent pattern of ideas which appears in many different contexts. The most persistent features of it are that rain produces food, and that food, through semen, produces offspring; the stages preceding rain are more varied. The *MuUp* version is particularly striking, since at first sight it looks like a haphazard juxtaposition. Comparison reveals that the old series, well attested in the *Brāhmaṇas* and early prose *Upaniṣads*, has survived in a verse *Upaniṣad*. The *BṛhUp* and *ChUp* Five Fires passages are unique in starting with faith (*śraddhā*), but they are not unique in including soma, since this appears in the *MuUp* series. Its inclusion must be related to its position as king of plants, and its association, or in some cases identification, with the moon, which in turn is associated with plants and with immortality.[31]

In all these texts we are presented with a linear series, not a cycle. They were worked into a cycle by our redactor, who clearly did not get all his ideas ready-made from some hypothetical non-Āryan circle, but operated with materials derived from the Vedic tradition of ritual and cosmological thought.

Parallels to the Two Paths pericope

While the *BṛhUp* and *ChUp* passages are the only ones in the classical *Upaniṣads* to combine the Five Fires and the Paths of the Dead, there are several *Upaniṣadic* passages which take up the topic of the Paths of the Dead.

MuUp 1, 2, 10-11 says that those who know only *iṣṭāpūrta* ('sacrifices and good works') enjoy heaven and then return to this world or a lower one; those who practise *tapas* and *śraddhā* reach the *ātman* through the door of the sun. Here, an *Upaniṣadic* author working on the theme of the contrast between ritual and transcendent knowledge has taken up and condensed our passage, letting the path of the ancestors stand appropriately for ritual, and the path of the gods for knowledge. He probably used the *ChUp* version, since he mentions low births, which appear in the *ChUp* version of the path of the ancestors but not in the *BṛhUp* version. It is also the *ChUp* version, not the *BṛhUp* version, that uses the term *iṣṭāpūrta*.

KauUp 1, 2 gives a different version of the paths of the dead. The path of the gods is named (*deva-yāna*, *KauUp* 1, 3), but its landmarks are quite

different, and do not include the sun. The path of the ancestors is not named, but its features are recognisable in the description of the journey of the dead to the moon, which is called the door of the heavenly world; the moon feeds on the *prāṇas* of the dead in the bright fortnight (*pūrva-pakṣe*) and causes them to be born in the dark fortnight (*apara-pakṣeṇa*). However, the parting of the paths is not at the cremation fire, which is not mentioned; all the dead go to the moon, and are asked who they are. Those who fail to give the true answer are sent down in the form of rain, and are reborn; those who answer correctly proceed on the path of the gods. This path thus represents a further progress beyond the path of the ancestors, rather than an alternative to it as in our two passages. *KauUp* 1, 2 describes rebirth according to deeds and knowledge, and lists some examples of species that one can be born in (the list is longer than the one in *ChUp* 5, 10, 7, and contains none of the same items). The passage includes some material taken from *JaiBr* 1, 46, including the motif of a password to the world beyond death; it also gives an elaborate geographical guide to the route followed by those who have full knowledge, leading eventually to an interview with Brahmā.

There are other *Upaniṣad* passages that we may take as cognates rather than reworkings of the Two Paths pericope, since they lack features that are significant in the *BṛhUp* and *ChUp* passages.

PrUp 1, 9-10 is closely parallel to our two passages. After identifying the year with Prajāpati, it describes two paths of the year, the southward (*dakṣiṇāyana*, i.e. the half-year from the summer solstice to the winter solstice) and the northward (*uttarāyaṇa*, from winter solstice to summer solstice). The account is very brief, but the context implies that these paths are travelled by the dead. The southward path is the path of the ancestors, which leads the dead to the moon from which they return. This path is reached by those who perform *upāsana* of sacrifice and good works (*iṣṭāpūrta*) as action (*kṛta*), and who desire offspring. The northward path leads to the sun, from which there is no return; it is cessation (*nirodha*). It is reached by those who seek the Self through *tapas*, *brahmacarya*, *śraddhā* and knowledge. The term 'path of the gods' is not used here, but 'path of the ancestors' is.

The passage is part of the answer to the first of the six questions in the *PrUp*: "Whence are these creatures born?" (*PrUp* 1, 3). The answer begins with Prajāpati's well-known desire for offspring, and his production of a pair (*mithuna*, a word with sexual connotations), breath (*prāṇa*, masculine) and wealth (*rayi*, feminine); these are identified with the sun and the moon, the bright fortnight and the dark fortnight, the day and the night. Wealth is identified with the path of the ancestors, and by implication *prāṇa* is the path of the gods. We can tabulate these identifications:

Breath:	sun	northward path	bright fortnight	day	[path of gods]	non-return
Wealth:	moon	southward path	dark fortnight	night	path of ancestors	return

(*PrUp* 1, 4-13).

One curious feature of this passage is its use of the term *upāsana* in its account of the path of the ancestors: *ye ha vai tad-iṣṭāpūrte kṛtam ity upāsate* "those who *upās* the sacrifices and good works of it [i.e. of a year] as deeds" (*PrUp* 1, 9).[32] This is closely parallel to the *ChUp* version of the path of the ancestors: *ya ime grāma iṣṭāpūrte dattam ity upāsate* "those who, in the village, *upās* sacrifices and good works as giving" (this portion does not appear in the *BṛhUp* version). The *PrUp* makes better sense than the *ChUp* here; using the notion of the year as the totality of time, it teaches an *upāsana* which identifies the ritual deeds of a year with those of a whole lifetime. This *PrUp* passage may therefore be close to our redactor's source.

We need not take the statement that those who take the path of the ancestors return (*punar āvartante*) as referring to rebirth in the classical sense. This path is taken by those who desire offspring, so the passage may be about two types of immortality: immortality through sons in this world, and immortality in a post-mortem state in the other world. We can compare it with *ŚBr* 2, 2, 4, 7-8, *ŚBr* 11, 2, 1, 1, and *JaiBr* 1, 46.

BṛhUp 5, 10 describes just one path of the dead: wind, sun, moon, a world without heat and without snow. There is no mention of any qualification for entering it; it seems to be open to all who die. But *ChUp* 4, 15, 5 gives a path which is open only to those who know the Man in the eye:

flame day bright fortnight northward path year sun moon lightning Brahman (*ChUp* 4, 15, 5).

The stages on this path are exactly the same as those on the Path of the Gods in *ChUp* 5, 10, 1.

Looking into the history of the topic of the Paths of the Dead before it came to be associated with the Five Fires, we find that it is very ancient, though its content has not always been the same. *ṚV* 10, 14, 2, in a context which clearly concerns the dead, speaks of the way (*gantu-*, singular) found by Yama, by which the ancestors have gone. In the same hymn, verse 7 tells the deceased to go by the paths (*path-*, plural) by which the ancestors have gone. However, there is no classification of different kinds of path.

ṚV 10, 88, 15 mentions two paths:

> There are two paths, I have heard, of the ancestors: of the gods, and of mortals. By them comes together all that moves in the world, all that is between the Father and the Mothe (*ṚV* 10, 88, 15).[33]

The context is a hymn to Agni Vaiśvānara, describing his activity in the two worlds of the sky and the earth, and also in the atmosphere; there is nothing about the dead in the hymn. The Father and the Mother are no doubt sky and earth, and the two paths seem to be related to them. The syntax of the first half of the verse is ambiguous. As translated above, it means that the ancestors have two paths, that of the gods and that of

mortals; but it could also be translated "There are two paths, I have heard from the ancestors: of gods, and of mortals."[34]

The verse is repeated many times in the *Veda*.[35] It is quoted in *BṛhUp* 6, 2, 2,[36] in the frame story of our passage; but it is understood there as "There are two paths, I have heard – of the ancestors and of the gods – of mortals." This construction fits the topic of the Two Paths, but it strains the word-order considerably. The verse is understood in the same way when it occurs in *ŚBr* 12, 8, 1, 21 (quoted from *VS* 19, 47). There, the two paths are explained as those by which "he [the yajamāna] leads the ancestors to heaven"; but we are not told what is the difference between them.

Apart from this verse, there is some precedent in the hymns for the pair 'path of the ancestors, path of the gods':

> We have come to the path of the gods, to carry out whatever we can (*ṚV* 10, 2, 3ab)...
> Agni, you who foreknow, and know by experience, the path that leads to the ancestors, shine forth brightly when kindled (*ṚV* 10, 2, 7).

Verse 3, like most of the hymn, refers to Agni's role as regulator of the ritual; verse 7 refers to another of his roles, as conveyor of the dead. But the two paths are mentioned so far apart that they hardly constitute a pair. The pair becomes clearer in the *Atharva-Veda*. Agni Kravyad – 'flesh-eating fire', the cremation fire – is told to go by way of the path of the ancestors, and not to come back by the path of the gods (*AV* 12, 2, 10); this is an example of the desire to separate the dead from the living which we find in the funeral hymns of *ṚV* 10 and in later death rituals. There are several references to these two paths elsewhere in the *AV* (e.g. *AV* 18, 4, 1-2); apparently the path of the gods is the one by which Agni carries offerings to the world of the gods, and the path of the ancestors is the one by which he carries the dead to the world of Yama. We thus begin to see why a pair of paths should be associated with Agni; but at this stage only one of these paths belongs to the dead. These *AV* hymns also show us how the two paths in *ṚV* 10, 88 15ab came to be understood as those of the gods and of the ancestors, rather than as those of the gods and of mortals; but again it is only the path of the ancestors that is travelled by the dead.

The association of the moon with the path of the dead is ancient. The addition of an alternative path that leads through the sun may have arisen from a set of ideas in the *ŚBr*. The sun measures days and years, and so is identified with time and with death.[37] To pass beyond death is to pass beyond the sun, and the way to do so is through the sun itself. The sun thus becomes the door of immortality, as it is for instance in *ĪśUp* 16. It thus appears as a better alternative to the moon, which is the door to the world of the dead. The inclusion of the moon in the path of the gods, as in *ChUp* 5, 10, 1, is a survival of the older notion of a single path of the dead.

Conclusion

The two well-known passages on the Five Fires and the Paths of the Dead do not represent a sudden intrusion of the ideas of rebirth, and of karman as determining rebirth, into Vedic thought. Belief in karman itself has a long history, if by karman we mean the capacity of an action to afect the destiny of the agent. This belief is clear in the *Brāhmaṇas* as well as the *Upaniṣads*, particularly in relation to actions in the ritual sphere with which the *Veda* is mainly concerned. One of our two passages, *BṛhUp* 6, 2, does not even mention karman as a determinant of rebirth. Indeed, it is not clear from this passage whether what is born is a moral agent or even a conscious being; the passage can be read as describing a biological process in which life descends in the form of rain and is eventually born as a living being.

The theory of karman and rebirth, together with *mokṣa*, did not appear as one package at the time of the *Upaniṣads*, however logical and cohesive that package may be in its classical form. It is made up of several distinct elements, which we have discussed above: karman as having inevitable results, good or bad; karman as an asset which the dead enjoy in the other world; rebirth of a man in his son; rebirth through cremation; the path to the world of the dead through the moon; and the path to immortality through the sun.

The topics of the Five Fires and the Two Paths occur together in only two passages of the classical *Upaniṣads*. These two passages appear to be based on the work of a redactor who used older *Vedic* material. This material can be divided into two main groups: the Five Fires material, which in the course of its previous history has had added to it the idea of birth from the fifth or sixth fire; and the Two Paths material. The redactor's principal innovation, besides bringing these two groups of material together, is to transform each of them from a linear series into a cycle.

Notes

1. E.g. Keith, 1925, vol. 2, p. 575; Basham, 1954, p. 242; Reat, 1977; Collins, 1982, p. 51; Tull, 1989, p. 32; Olivelle, 1992, pp. 44f.
2. Garbe (pp. 434–5) refers simply to the *ŚBr*, without further indication. He does not attribute the fully formed theory itself to non-Āryan origin; instead, he postulates "the primitive belief - whether it be that of the Indian aboriginal tribes or that of the lower strata of the Āryan people" that the souls of men pass after death into plants and animals, and conjectures that this belief "gave merely the first impulse to the formation of the doctrine of transmigration".
3. Reat, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
6. For *sukṛtasya loka-* and related phrases such as *sukṛtām loka-*, see Gonda, 1966, esp. pp. 130ff. The idea that good deeds prepare a place in the world beyond death is found in the Avesta (*Hāδoxt Nask*, ch. 2); the text is translated by M. Molé in Yoyotte et al., 1961, p. 159.

7. Söhnen, 1979. Söhnen (p. 180 with note 7) cites Deussen, Keith, Ruben and Renou as dating the *KauUp* later than the other two. I am grateful to Dr Söhnen-Thieme for giving me a copy of this article.
8. E.g. Deussen, 1906, pp. 17-21; Frauwallner, 1973, vol. 1, p. 34. The theory is criticized in Keith, 1925, vol. 2, pp. 493-6; Tull, 1981, pp. 24f.
9. Bodewitz, 1976, p. 183.
10. Olivelle, 1992, pp. 37f.
11. The term pericope (from Greek *perikopē* 'section'; the final e is pronounced) is borrowed here from the terminology of biblical criticism. Its oldest use in connection with the Bible refers to a portion of text selected for liturgical reading; but the commonest modern use refers to a portion which the textual critic identifies as having existed separately before being placed in its canonical context. Much twentieth-century biblical scholarship has been concerned with the sources, mainly conjecturally reconstructed, from which particular pericopes appear to have been taken ('source criticism'), the original literary form of each pericope ('form criticism'), and the ways in which pericopes have been arranged and adapted in their canonical context ('redaction criticism'). This article is meant to show that similar methods can be applied to *Upaniṣadic* texts.
12. Eggeling, *Śatapatha-brâhmaṇa*, vol. 1, p. 16n. gives further *Vedic* references.
13. Gonda, 1965, pp. 122-5.
14. Frauwallner, 1973, vol. 1, p. 36.
15. Sometimes such an identification is referred to as an *upaniṣad*, a word of similar etymological meaning. This, rather than the usual conjecture 'sitting down near [the teacher]', may be the origin of the use of the word *upaniṣad* to mean a text in which such identifications are taught. E.g.:

    Now the teaching of *Upaniṣads*. The Śākāyanins *upās* Agni as Vāyu; some people say Agni is the sun... (*ŚBr* 10, 4, 5, 1-2).

16. Hume's translation 'truly worship faith' is based on failure to recognise the meaning of *upās* with two accusatives.
17. Cf. Bodewitz, *op. cit.*, p. 121 n10.
18. For this pair, cf. *teja eva śraddhā* 'heat is truth' (*ŚBr* 11, 3, 1, 1).
19. The half of the lunar month in which the moon is waxing; the dark fortnight is the half in which it is waning.
20. The northern course of the sun, the half of the year from the winter solstice to the summer solstice; *dakṣiṇāyana* is the other half of the year.
21. The world of the gods.
22. The world of the ancestors.
23. Gonda, 1965, pp. 38 70.
24. There are further problems which are not mentioned: what happens if the plant is eaten by a female, and how do non-herbivorous animals reproduce?
25. The *prāṇāgnihotra* is a twice-daily ritual in which the offering is the food eaten by the sacrificer. See Bodewitz, *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa I, 1-65*, pp. 213-338. The term is used in *ChUp* 5, 19-24, which gives instructions for a form of *agnihotra* in which offerings are made to the faculties, and thereby satisfy their cosmic counterparts.
26. Translated in Bodewitz, *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa I, 1-65*, pp. 114-6.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 117, n3.
28. Cf. Bodewitz, 1976, p. 162.
29. *etaṃ haiva prājatiṃ prajāyate yāṃ prajāpatiḥ prājāyata*. Eggeling translates slightly differently: "reproduces himself by offspring even as Prajāpati reproduced himself". The question underlying the difference of translation is whether the reference is to actual offspring, born as a reward for performing the *agnihotra*, or to the *agnihotra* itself. In the case of Prajāpati, who is both the primordial father and the primordial *yajamāna*, the two are the same; he procreates by sacrificing.
30. The text says "plants on earth", which allows us to place the earth before the plants in the series, despite the word-order.
31. See above, note 23.
32. Hume's and Radhakrishnan's translations ignore the word *tad*.
33. *dve srutī asṛṇavaṃ pitṝṇāṃ ahaṃ devānām uta martyānām / tābhyām idam viśvam ejat sameti yad antarā pitaraṃ mātaraṃ ca.*

34. The ambiguity arises from the three genitive plurals. K. F. Geldner (vol. 3, p. 282) construes in the second way. Renou (1965, p. 93) construes it in the first way, on the grounds that the use of *śru* with the genitive in the sense of 'hear from, learn from' is not otherwise found in the *Ṛgvedic* hymns. It is, however, found in later *Vedic* texts, e.g. *ĪśUp* 10, repeated *ĪśUp* 13: *iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nas tad vicacakṣire* "Thus have we heard from the wise who have explained it to us"; similarly *KeUp* 1, 3. Oldenberg (1912), p. 295, cited by Söhnen, pp. 207f., note 43, construes it in a third way: "There are two paths of the ancestors, gods and mortals", so that both paths belong to all three classes of beings; this is the construction followed by Sāyaṇa in his commentary on the *ṚV*.
35. Bloomfield, 1906, p. 515, lists twelve occurrences, and four citations by the opening words (*pratīka*).
36. With the insignificant change of *srutī* to *sṛtī*.
37. See especially *ŚBr* 10, 4, 3; also *ŚBr* 1, 9, 3, 15; 10, 2, 4, 3; 10, 5, 2, 4; 11, 2, 6, 11; 14, 1, 3, 4.

Abbreviations

AiBr	*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*
AiUp	*Aitareya Upaniṣad*
AV	*Atharva Veda*
BṛhUp	*Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
ChUp	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
ĪśUp	*Īśā Upaniṣad*
JaiBr	*Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*
KaUp	*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*
MuUp	*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*
PrUp	*Praśna Upaniṣad*
ŚBr	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*
TS	*Taittirīya Saṃhitā*
ṚV	*Ṛg-Veda Saṃhitā*
VS	*Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā*

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The Vitalistic Antecedents of the Ātman-Brahman Concept

Peter Connolly, Chichester Institute of Higher Education

The classical literature of the Vedānta *darśana* employs the terms *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* to characterize the nature of ultimate reality (*ātman-Brahman*), though such descriptions, as Deutsch points out, "... are not so much qualifying attributes of Brahman as they are the terms that express the apprehension of Brahman by man."[1] The classical Vedānta teachers such as Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja are also insistent that the vitalistic principle (*prāṇa*) is merely a phenomenal rather than an ultimate reality.[2] At the same time, these teachers maintain that their views are nothing more than interpretations of the Vedāntic scriptures, primarily the *Upaniṣads*. In what follows I shall seek to demonstrate that the views of both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja are, in most cases, misinterpretations of the relevant *Upaniṣads* by (a) showing that in many *Upaniṣads*, *prāṇa is* regarded as an ultimate reality and (b) indicating how *Upaniṣadic* conceptions of *ātman* and brahman frequently incorporated features that were originally employed to characterize *prāṇa*.

Pre-*Upaniṣadic* Concepts of *Prāṇa*

The recognition of *prāṇa* as an ultimate principle actually pre-dates the *Upaniṣads*. In the *Atharva Veda* (11.4) *prāṇa* is described as the ultimate source, ground and controller of all. This hymn, according to A. H. Ewing, presents us with 'the highest meaning of *prāṇa*,' with *prāṇa* as the 'primeval cosmic principle.'[3] The passages where this primeval status is most clearly established are:

Vs 1 Homage to *prāṇa* in whose control is this all, who hath been lord of all, in whom all stand firm.

Vs 10 Breath (*prāṇa*) clothes (*anu-vas*) human beings (*praja*) as a father clothes a dear son; breath is lord of all, both what breathes and what does not.

Vs 12 Breath is Virāj, breath is the directress, breath all worship, breath is the sun, the moon; breath they call Prajāpati.

Vs 15 Breath they call Mātariśvan; breath is called the wind; in breath what has been and what will be, in breath is all established (*pratiṣthita*).[4]

That the conception of *prāṇa* set out above was held by a number of Vedic teachers, is evident from an examination of later texts such as the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.* The first of these contains five component *Āraṇyakas*, the second of which divides naturally into two parts. Part one (*adhyāyhas* 1–3) deals with the *uktha* (the high chant of the *Ṛgveda*) whilst part two constitutes what is more generally known as the *Aitareya Upaniṣad.* The material dealing with *prāṇa* is found almost entirely in part one.

To understand the views about *prāṇa* that are held by the author of this text one needs to begin with the story of the faculties trying to determine which of them is the hymn (*uktha*), this being employed as a synonym for the supreme principle (2.1.4). Speech, sight, hearing and mind all quit the body but it only falls when the *prāṇa* departs. Similarly, each in turn returns to the body but only on the return of *prāṇa* is it re-animated. At this demonstration of the *prāṇa*'s supremacy the other faculties proclaim that:

> ...breath only is the hymn. Let men know that breath is the hymn. The gods said to breath, 'Thou art the hymn, thou art all this, we are thine, thou art ours.'[5]

The identity of *prāṇa* and *uktha* can then, presumably, be read back into 2.1.2, where it is said that all existence springs from the *uktha.*[6] Certainly, the verses following 2.1.3 simply reiterate this view in a variety of ways, a reiteration that is continued throughout *adhyāyas* 2 and 3.2.1.5 commences with the statement that, "The gods carried him forward."[7] The most logical identity of 'him' is the *prāṇa*-who-is-the-*uktha* and this is confirmed by Sāyaṇa, the only traditional commentator to comment on the entire *Āraṇyaka.*[8] Also, in 2.1.5 there is a distinction made between *prāṇa* and *apāna* and each is placed on a level with other faculties (speech, etc). So we read:

> Day is breathing forth (*prāṇa*), night is breathing down (*apāna*). Speech is fire, sight yonder sun, mind the moon, hearing the quarters ...[9]

Then we are told that:

> ...this is the union of those sent forth.[10]

'Those sent forth' are obviously the faculties, speech, etc, which are regarded as the forms of deities residing in the body. "This," as Keith points out,[11] "is obscure" but a reasonable interpretation, given the context, would be that it is the *prāṇa*-which-is-the-*uktha*. *Prāṇa* and *apāna* would then simply be derivatives of this in the same way that speech etc, are.

In 2.1.6 we are again reminded of the ultimate nature of *prāṇa* when we are told that:

> ... all of this is covered by *prāṇa*. This ether is supported by *prāṇa* ...[12]

Such a power is obviously a creative force and the remainder of the *adhyāya* and the whole of the next are devoted to establishing a link between, if not the identity of, *prāṇa*, the cosmic *puruṣa* and Prajāpati. The powers of *prāṇa* (which is called 'this person' in 2.1.7 and 'he who shines' in 2.2.11) are that he creates earth, fire, sky, heaven, the sun, the quarters, the moon, the waters and Varuṇa (lord of the moral order (*ṛta*) and the deep water). Furthermore, he is, "all these verses, all these *Vedas*, all sounds (*ghoṣa*)..."[13] a list which, presumably includes the thirty-six syllabled *bṛhati* metre, which is 'the whole self'.[14] Finally, we may note that in 2.2.3 Indra tells Viśvamitra that he (Indra) is *prāṇa*, Viśvamitra is *prāṇa* and all creatures are *prāṇa*.

We can thus conclude that in this part of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, the only part dealing at all comprehensively with the topic of *prāṇa*, the vital force is considered to be the source of all and the ground or being of all.

In *A.Ā.* 2.1.8 we are informed that it is knowledge of *prāṇa*, of how it functions and how it exists in the human body, 'the hiding place of brahman', that brings immortality. Why this should be so can be inferred from a study of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. In 1.4.3.8 there is a reference to the '*antasthā prāṇa*' (the middle or central *prāṇa*) which Ewing regards as synonymous with the '*madhyama prāṇa*' of the *Upaniṣads*.[15] He also suggests that here the clear intention of the verse is to present *prāṇa* as 'the controlling influence', the 'Inner Ruler' which is 'an active, conscious, even Divine Force which dominates the entire organism'.[16] Eggeling translates thus:

> ... what central breath [*antasthā prāṇa*] there is (in the body) ... that one indeed is the internal motive force of the breathings ... And whosoever knows that internal motive force of the breathings, him they regard as the internal motive force.[17]

If Ewing is correct then we have here a concept which is almost identical to the *Upaniṣadic antaryāmin* (inner controller). The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* also equates *prāṇa* with the immortal element in man (*Ś.B.* 2.2.2.8–15; 10.2.6.18) and states that the *prāṇas*, which are 'the highest thing of all this universe' (8.7.4.21), are immortality (9.1.2.32). Mythically, this is presented in terms of the division of Prajāpati in *Ś.B.* 10.1.4.1:

> Now at the beginning, Prajāpati was (composed of) both these, the mortal and immortal – his vital airs alone were immortal, his body mortal ...

Such a division is also reflected in the human being; hence *Ś.B.* 6.7.1.11 informs us that,

> ... that part of the vital air which is immortal is above the navel and streams out by upward breathing; but that which is mortal passes by and away from the navel ...

A crucial part of this knowledge of *prāṇa* is, as was noted above in connection with the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka,* that it exists in two principal modes, a unitary one, when it is the foundation of all existence and the inner controller of the individual, and diversified one, when it is the various cosmic forces and the breaths and faculties which exist in the body. Hence, 8.7.3.21 informs us that,

> ... this vital air [*prāṇa*] whilst being one only, extends over all the limbs, over the whole body,[18]

and 11.1.2.3 explains that:

> ... this sacrifice is the blowing (wind) [*vāyu* = *prāṇa*]: he blows, as it were, as a single one, but when he has entered into man he is divided into ten parts.[19]

Most statements about the number of *prāṇas* in the *Ś.B.* suggest that there are ten of them. However, some texts increase the number by varying amounts; hence we find references to eleven (8.4.3.8; 11.2.1.2), twelve (12.3.2.2) and thirteen (3.8.4.1).

The unified *prāṇa* enters the body by way of the head[20] and then spreads throughout, infusing every limb.[21] In doing so it nourishes and vitalizes the body.[22] Those parts not reached by the *prāṇa* dry up and wither away.[23] The distribution of *prāṇa* appears to be effected by means of definite pathways, though the text is not clear on this.

The vitalisation of the body appears to be the result of the activities of the five *prāṇas: prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna* and *samāna*. However, as was noted in connection with the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, the one *prāṇa* also manifests as the different sensory faculties. There are various lists of these in the *Ś.B.* The '*prāṇas* in the head' or 'the *prāṇas* of Prajāpati' (7.5.2.6, 9.2.2.5 and 9.3.3.8) are mind (*manas*), eye (*cakṣus*), breath (*prāṇa*), ear (*śrotra*) and voice (*vāc*). The eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth are the seven *prāṇas* mentioned in 7.5.2.8–12 and the same list, with speech substituted for mouth, is found in 9.3.1.10–12. Hence, when *prāṇa* diversifies in the body it manifests as both vital forces (the five *prāṇas*) and perceptual faculties.

This is not all, for, as we might expect from the inclusion of *manas* among the list of *prāṇas*, *prāṇa* is also the source, if not the substance of mentation. Thus, "... *Savitṛ* is the mind and the thoughts are the vital airs ...",[24] and "... the divine inspirers doubtless are the vital airs, for these inspire all thoughts ...".[25]

A similar sentiment is found in *A.Ā.* 2.3.5, where we are told that:

> … the self that is speech is imperfect, since a man understands if driven to thought by breath (*prāṇa*), not if driven by speech.[26]

Thus, in many parts of pre-*Upaniṣadic Vedic* literature the vitalistic principle, *prāṇa*, is presented as the self-existent source of everything, the ground or being of ephemeral mortal forms. It is diversified as *prāṇa*, *apāna*, etc., the perceptual faculties and, possibly, thoughts. One who knows this, who knows the deity, knows the supreme *prāṇa*, knows the immortal (which is the true essence of a person) and attains immortality. We have here, then, the same salvific scheme that dominates the *Upaniṣads*. At the heart of this scheme, however, resides the vital principle, the *prāṇa*, not *ātman* or Brahman.

Prāṇa as an ultimate principle in the *Upaniṣads*

An examination of all references to *prāṇa* in the *Upaniṣads* reveals that the prominent view is quite similar to that already outlined with regard to pre-*Upaniṣadic* literature: *prāṇa* is the primeval source of all and the immortal inner essence of individuals which manifests in the body as the various breaths (*apāna*, etc.) and faculties. In a number of instances this is presented in an unambiguous manner, in others, however, close analysis is required to demonstrate their espousal of such a view.

However, this is not the only view of *prāṇa* to be found in the *Upaniṣads*. In a number of places it is presented as what I shall call a cosmic principle, i.e. one which is derived from the fundamental principle but which itself is the source of further manifestations at the level of phenomenal or individualised existence. In yet other places we find accounts of *prāṇa* only as it appears at the phenomenal level. In some cases these could be taken to be statements about the phenomenal manifestation of a higher principle which is assumed but not referred to. In others, however, it is clear that the author(s) are operating with a different model of existence than that assumed in the passages referred to above and that, in these instances, *prāṇa* does not have the high status ascribed to it by the other accounts.

Clearly the characterisation of *prāṇa* as a cosmic or phenomenal principle by Vedāntins such as Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja can be supported by reference to the above-mentioned passages, e.g. *B.A.U.* 1.2; *C.U.* 1.1, 3.12–18 and 6; *T.U.* 1–3; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 4 and 5; *P.U.* 3; *Mait. U.* 2.6–7. Nevertheless, by far the most frequent way of presenting *prāṇa* in the *Upaniṣads* is as an ultimate principle. Many of these accounts are picked out for consideration by Bādarāyaṇa because of their 'problematic' nature (i.e. they present *prāṇa*, not *ātman* or Brahman, as the ultimate principle). His hermeneutical strategy in the *Brahmasūtra* is essentially designed to show

that *Upaniṣadic* teachers who presented *prāṇa* as the ultimate did not really mean what they said. In their own ways Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja echo this sentiment. My aim in this section is to demonstrate that Bādarāyaṇa, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and other Vedāntins who followed them have, in fact, distorted the message of the above-mentioned teachers.

Passages in the *Upaniṣads* where *prāṇa* is presented as an ultimate principle can be divided into two groups: straightforward and metaphorical. The straightforward passages are *B.A.U.* 1.6.1–3, 2.3.1–6, 3.9, 4.4.7 and 4.4.22; *C.U.* 3.15.4, 4.3.1–4, 4.10.4–5 and chapter 7; *P.U.* 2; *Muṇḍ. U.* 3.1.4 and *Kauṣ. U.* 4.20. The metaphorical passages are those which present the various faculties arguing about their respective status, particularly about which of them is supreme: *B.A.U.* 1.3, 1.5.22 and 6.1.1–14; *C.U.* 1.2.1–14 and 5.1.1–15; *Kauṣ. U.* 2.14 and 3.3, and *P.U.* 2.1–13. Of these *B.A.U.* 1.3 and *C.U.* 1.2.1–14 are versions of the same account. The same is true for *B.A.U.* 6.1.1–14 and *C.U.* 5.1.1–15.

Some of the straightforward passages offer simple statements about the ultimacy of *prāṇa*, e.g. *prāṇa* is everything (*C.U.* 3.15.4, *Kaṭh. U.* 2.3.2); *prāṇa* is Brahman (*C.U.* 4.10.4–5); *prāṇa* is the *ātman* (*Muṇḍ. U.* 3.14). Others develop related themes from different perspectives and these warrant more detailed discussion.

One theme is that of the two aspects of the ultimate: an unmanifest and a manifest; an immortal and a mortal; a mobile and an immobile; a transcendent and an existent; the one god and the many gods (*B.A.U.* 2.3.1–6, 3.9). In every case *prāṇa* is identified with the first item in each pair.

Another theme is that of the single source and the many manifestations. Thus, in *B.A.U.* 3.9, where it is stated that *prāṇa* is the one god (*eka deva*), we are told that the 33 gods are but manifestations of that one god and that the eleven Rudras are the ten *prāṇas* (*prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna, samāna, vāc, cakṣus, śrotra, nāsā, manas?*) and *ātman* (here meaning body or, possibly, ego (ego/personality). *Ātman* (self) is declared to be none of these *prāṇas* (*neti, neti*). This latter *ātman* is obviously to be distinguished from the eleventh of the *prāṇas* and would thus seem to equate with the one god, the *prāṇa*, which has the *prāṇas* as its manifestations. Similarly, *B.A.U.* 4.3–4 equates *ātman*, Brahman and *prāṇa*. This *ātman*/Brahman/*prāṇa* is the light within the heart, abides in the space within the heart, is immortal, is the lord, controller and ruler of all and is the one made of consciousness among the *prāṇas* (*vijñānamaya prāṇeṣu*). This *ātman*/Brahman/*prāṇa* has, as its manifestations, *vijñāna, manas, prāṇa, cakṣus, śrotra, pṛthivī, apas, vāyu, ākāśa, tejas, atejas, kāma, akāma, krodha, akrodha, dharma, adharma* and everything (*sarvamaya*). The gods worship it as the light of lights (*jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*) and as life immortal (*āyuramṛta*).

The equation of *ātman*, Brahman and *prāṇa* can also be deduced from a consideration of verses which connect with *B.A.U.* 2.3.6, where it states that "... the *prāṇas* are truth and this (*eṣa*) is the truth of those (*teṣām*)." This *prāṇa* which is the truth of the truth, is the person in the right eye, the

essence of the truth. In *B.A.U.* 2.1.20 *ātman* is described as the truth of truth (*satyasya satyam*) and in *C.U.* 4.15.1 as the person seen in the eye, who is without fear, immortal, Brahman.

The final passage presenting *prāṇa* as an ultimate principle that I will comment on is *C.U.* 7. This chapter does not, on the surface, present *prāṇa* as an ultimate principle for it distinguishes it from *ātman*. However, in my opinion this view has been redacted into an original account which presented *prāṇa* as the ultimate principle. The chapter deals with Sanatkumāra's instructions to Nārada on the progressive worship of Brahman. The teaching begins with the statement that worshipping Brahman as name (*nāma*) is quite legitimate. However, we are told that speech (*vāc*) is greater than name; in turn, mind (*manas*) is greater than speech; will (*saṃkalpa*) is greater than mind; thought (*citta*) is greater than will; contemplation (*dhyāna*) is greater than thought; understanding (*vijñāna*) is greater than contemplation; strength (*bala*) is greater than understanding; food (*anna*) is greater than strength; water (*ap*) is greater than food; heat (*tejas*) is greater than water; ether (*ākāśa*) is greater than heat; memory (*smara*) is greater than ether; hope (*āśā*) is greater than memory; breath/life (*prāṇa*) is greater than hope.

At this point the narrative changes. Whereas each of the preceding sections ended with the words "Venerable Sir, is there anything greater than ...? Yes, there is something greater than ... Do, Venerable Sir, tell me that ..." section 15, where it is stated that *prāṇa* is greater than *āśā*, ends with:

> *Prāṇa* is all this. Verily, he who sees this, thinks this, understands this, becomes an excellent speaker [*ativādin*]. Even if people should say to him, 'you are an excellent speaker', he should not deny it.[27]

The following section introduces a different kind of treatment, where concepts such as truth (*satya*), understanding (*vijñāna*) and faith (*śraddhā*) are described. It is clear that this set of verses forms part of a different analysis than that offered by the first set. Instead of commenting on the relative merits of the different concepts Sanatkumāra introduces them as being desirable to understand. Hence, each of the sections from sixteen to twenty-three, which introduces the concept of the infinite (*bhūma*), ends with the words "Venerable Sir, I desire to understand ...". The infinite is described in the following two verses, after which we read in 25.1, "Now next, the instruction with regard to the self-sense (*ahaṃkāra*)."[28] The following verse (25.2) introduces "the instruction in regard to the self (*ātman*)", which is described as being "this all". Then, in 26.1, we are told that *prāṇa* springs from the *ātman* (*ātmataḥ prāṇaḥ*), hope (*āśā*) springs from the self, memory springs from the self and so on back down the list in 7.1.3–15.

What is peculiar about 26.1 is that none of the qualities listed between 16.1 and 25.1 are mentioned as springing from the self. This creates a distinct sense of discontinuity. The continuity can be restored, however, by

taking 7.25.2 and 7.26.1 and placing them immediately after 7.15.4. In fact, this is what William Beidler does in his interpretation of this chapter though he does not indicate that he is doing so. The only problem with such a move is that 7.15.4 and 7.25.2 seem to contradict each other. The former states that *prāṇa* is everything (*prāṇa hy evaitāni sarvāṇi bhavati*); the latter makes an almost identical claim about *ātman* (*ātmaivedam sarvam iti*) whilst at the same time, in the next verse, stating that *prāṇa* is derived from the *ātman*. It is this incompatiliblty which, I would suggest, explains why 7.16–25 was interpolated at this point. If the redactor wanted to subordinate *prāṇa* to *ātman* it would be foolish for him simply to add 7.25.2 and 7.26.1 onto 7.15.4 for the incompatibility just discussed would be readily apparent. What better way to disguise it than by creating a break between the statement exhalting *prāṇa* and that exhalting *ātman*? If the interpolation could have a style which created the impression of continuity all the better. This, I would suggest, is exactly what we have here: an original text presenting *prāṇa* as the ultimate principle which has been modified by two additions. One of these begins either halfway through 7.25.1, where *ahaṃkāra* is introduced, or at 7.25.2, where *ātman* is introduced. The purpose of this addition is to subordinate all the principles mentioned in 7.1–15 to the *ātman*. The second addition comprises 7.16 to 7.24.2 or 7.16 to 7.25. The purpose of this addition is to obscure the incompatibility of the statements in 7.15.4 and 7.25.3. *C.U.* 7.1–15 thus constitutes a complete unit in its own right and presents *prāṇa* as the ultimate principle.

The view of *prāṇa* presented above finds its clearest *Upaniṣadic* expression in the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, the only early *Upaniṣad* not commented on by Śaṅkara. In *Kauṣ. U.* 4.20 Ajātasātru teaches Dṛpta Bālāki of the Gargya clan, as he did in *B.A.U.* 2.1.17. The teaching is that during sleep speech (*vāc*) together with all names, eye (*cakṣus*) together with all forms, ear (*śrotra*) together with all sounds and mind (*manas*) together with all thoughts enter the *prāṇa*. On waking, the *prāṇas* proceed from the self (*atman* = *prāṇa*), the gods (*deva*) from the *prāṇas* and the worlds (*loka*) from the gods. We are then told that the *prāṇa*, the intelligence-self (*prajñātman*) enters the bodily self (*śarīrātman*) up to the hairs and nails like a razor in a razor case: "on that self these other selves depend as upon a chief his own men".[29]

It is clear that there is much in common between this passage and *B.A.U.* 1.4.7. It seems likely that one borrowed from the other or that they both drew on a common srouce. The Kauṣītaki account is more detailed and makes it clear that the *ātman*/Brahman of *B.A.U.* 1.4.7. and 10 is the *prāṇa*/*prajñātman*, this last term being used to indicate the supreme self in *A.U.* 3. Similarly, the context in which these equations occur is also found at *B.A.U.* 2.17 where the term *vijñāna-maya-puruṣa* is employed to refer to the *ātman*. It would appear, then, that the terms *prāṇa*, *ātman*, *prajñātman*, *vijñāna-maya-puruṣa* and Brahman were regarded as being synonymous in meaning by a number of *Upaniṣadic* teachers. This Kauṣītaki account, because it

draws the various elements from other places together, thus gives substance to what elsewhere was simply inference.

The other passages where *prāṇa* is presented as an ultimate principle I have dubbed metaphorical. They deal in different ways with a contest between the various faculties for supreme status. By and large, these accounts reiterate what has been said above about the nature of *prāṇa* in pre-*Upaniṣadic* and *Upaniṣadic* literature. They can thus be seen to support my interpretation of that material. In these stories *prāṇa* is presented as a major cosmic principle or as the one ultimate principle from which all else derives. At the material level of creation it diversifies itself to produce both the physical aspects of existence and the more subtle aspects which animate the physical ones. All these accounts describe the subtle manifestations in terms of the sensory faculties plus mind (*manas*), speech (*vāc*) and breath (*prāṇa*), the manifestation most directly derived from and closest in nature to the original cosmic *prāṇa*. Almost every account makes *prāṇa* an immortal principle and the Kauṣītaki accounts make it the intelligence self (*prajñātman*) and the self (*ātman*). Hence, as in the pre-*Upaniṣadic* accounts, *prāṇa* gives rise to mentation – through the *manas* – and, perhaps expressed more clearly here than in the earlier material, it is that reality which can be described as consciousness or intelligence (*prajñā*) or as self (*ātman*).

The Vitalistic Blueprint

It is clear from the foregoing that within the *Vedic* tradition a considerable number of teachers regarded *prāṇa* as the ultimate principle of existence, the immortal source and foundation of everything else, the inner controller of all living beings, unitary in itself but diversified within beings in a variety of ways. Knowledge of this immortal, unitary *prāṇa* constitutes the goal of the religious life. Yet *prāṇa* is not the only term employed to designate this ultimate principle. In the *Upaniṣads* descriptions that are virtually identical to those of *prāṇa* mentioned previously can be found associated with the terms *ātman* and Brahman. The main passages offering such descriptions are *B.A.U.* 1.4.7, 2.1.17, and 4.1.2; *A.U.* 1.2; *Mait. U.* 6.1–3, and 8, and *Kena U.* 1.

B.A.U. 1.4.7

The *Brāhmaṇa* of which this verse is a part opens with the words *ātmaivedam agra āsit puruṣavidhah*: "In the beginning this (world) was only the self (*ātman*), in the shape of a person."[30] The following verses then describe the process of creation through the bifurcation of the self into man and woman. These transform successfully into all living forms. Verse five then informs us that "he became the creation" (*tataḥ sṛṣṭir abhavat*) and verse seven that at the time 'this' was unmanifest (*taḍhedaṃ tarhy avyākṛtam āsit*), it became manifest

through name and form (*nāmarūpa*). He (the *ātman*) entered that which had become manifest,

> even to the tips of the nails, as a razor is (hidden) in the razor case, or as fire in the fire source. Him they see not for (as seen) he is incomplete, when breathing he is called breath (*prāṇa*), when speaking voice (*vāc*), when seeing eye (*cakṣus*), when hearing ear (*śrotra*) when thinking mind (*manas*). These are merely the names of his acts ... The self is to be meditated upon for in it all those become one.[31]

In verse ten, echoing verse one, we are told that in the beginning this (self? world?) was Brahman (*brahma vā idam agra āsit*). This Brahman, like *ātman* in verse one, became the whole creation (*tasmāt tat sarvam abhavat*). These verses thus serve to equate *ātman* and Brahman. The whole section, however, is highly reminiscent of statements about *prāṇa* who, as seen, is incomplete, who manifests as *prāṇa*, *vāc*, *cakṣus*, *śrotra* and *manas* and who is ultimately the unitary immortal source of all. In other words, the pattern employed in this text to establish *ātmaṇ*/Brahman as the fundamental principle is one which is clearly modelled on earlier accounts of the nature of *prāṇa*.

B.A.U. 2.1.17

This verse describes how the *vijñāna-maya-puruṣa* (the person made of consciousness) takes the consciousness (*vijñānam*) of the *prāṇa*s, here referring to the various faculties, into itself and resides in the space within the heart (*antar-hṛdaya-ākāśa*) during sleep. The verse ends with the statement "when the breath (*prāṇa*) is restrained, speech (*vāc*) is restrained, the eye (*cakṣus*) is restrained, the ear (*śrotra*) is restrained, the mind (*manas*) is restrained." Verse twenty indicates that this *vijñāna-maya-puruṣa* is, in fact, the *ātman*, from which come all *prāṇa*s, all worlds (*loka*), all deities (*deva*) and all beings (*bhūta*). The verse ends with the statement "*prāṇa*s are the truth (*satya*) and their truth is this (*ātman*)".[32]

Here again we have the connection between the *prāṇa*s (faculties/vital breaths) and the self (*ātman*). The relationship between the two is identical to that which in other contexts operates between the unitary *prāṇa* and the diversified *prāṇa*s.

B.A.U. 4.1–2

There are seven verses in the first *Brāhmaṇa* of this chapter, for which Radhakrishnan provides the sub-heading "Inadequate definitions of Brahman".[33] It is part of Yājñavalkya's teaching. Here he asks King Janaka of Videha what other teachers have said about the highest Brahman (*parama brahman*). Upon receiving this request Janaka states that Jitvan Śailini says "speech (*vāc*) is the highest Brahman", Udaṅka Śaulbāyana says "breath (*prāṇa*) is the highest Brahman", Barka Vārṣṇa

says "the eye (*cakṣus*) is the highest Brahman", Gardhabhivipita Bhāradvāja says "the ear (*śrotra*) is the highest Brahman", Satyakāma Jabāla says "the heart (*hṛdaya*) is [the highest] Brahman". To all these claims Yājñavalkya has just one reply: "This Brahman is only one-footed, Your Majesty", i.e. it is incomplete or inadequate.

However, Yājñavalkya himself makes no statements about the nature of the highest Brahman. Rather, in 4.2 he asks Janaka where he will go after death. Janaka admits his ignorance and asks Yājñavalka to enlighten him. Yājñavalka points out the person in the right eye is Indra (*Indha*) and the person in the left eye is his wife (*Virāj*). These two are united in the space within the heart and move in that channel (*nāḍī*) which goes upward from the heart. Nourishment flows to them through the channels (*hitāḥ*) of the heart. "Therefore that (self composed of *Indha* and *Virāj*) is, as it were, an eater of finer food than the bodily self (*śarira ātman*)."[34] The next verse (v.4) then states that his (the self's) western side are the western breaths, the eastern side, the eastern breaths, etc. but the self (*ātman*) is not this, not this (*neti, neti*); (see *C.U.* 3.13.1–6 for a correlation between individual breaths and each of the five directions). The *ātman* is then described in exactly the same words that are found in the description of the *ātman* in *B.A.U.* 3.9.26: it is incomprehensible, indestructible, unattached, unfettered, free from suffering and injury.

These two *Brāhmaṇas* constitute what is obviously a version of the competition of the faculties. *Vāc*, *prāṇa*, *cakṣus*, *śrotra*, *manas* and, here, *hṛdaya* are all deemed to be incomplete expressions of Brahman. The complete expression appears to be *ātman*, who is said to be none of the *prāṇas* (here linked with the various directions; in 3.9 stated to be *prāṇa*, *apāna* etc.) and to be incomprehensible etc. Again, there can be little doubt that the manner of introducing and describing the *ātman* is modelled on other accounts where the unitary *prāṇa* occupies the place of the *ātman*. Here, however, instead of the *ātman* which is *prāṇa* occupying the body completely like a razor in a razor case, as in *Kauṣ U.* 4.20, it abides in the heart.

A.U. 1.2

This is complex text which is difficult to interpret but, given the foregoing analysis of other *Upaniṣadic* passages and the argument set out below, its status as an account of the nature of *ātman* which is 'modelled' on similar accounts of the nature of *prāṇa* is not difficult to appreciate. The story line is that of the *ātman* creating the universe. First he creates the worlds (*loka*), which are water (*ambhas*), light space or light rays (*marīci*), death (*māra*) and water (*apas*). Water (*ambhas*) is above heaven or sky (*dyaus*), which is its support. The light space (*marīci*) is the atmosphere; death (*māra*) is the earth (*pṛthivī*) and beneath that are the waters (*apas*). Many translators take the following verses to teach that *puruṣa* was then created out of the waters by the self. The text reads "*so 'dbhya eva puruṣam samuḍhṛtyāmūrchayat*",[35] and this

could legitimately be rendered as something like, "from out of these (*udbhya*-ablative plural) he took and gave form to the *puruṣa*". In other words, the *puruṣa* was derived from all the worlds created by the self and not just from the waters. Then the *ātman* broods over (*abhyatapa*) the *puruṣa* and 'hatches' (*nirabhidyata*) the world guardians (*lokapāla*), which are the various faculties and phenomena, from the parts of the *puruṣa*'s body. The pattern of derivation can be set out as follows:

mouth (*mukha*) →	speech (*vāc*) →	fire (*agni*)
nostrils (*nāsike*)	breath (*prāṇa*)	wind (*vāyu*)
eyes (*akṣini*)	sight (*cakṣus*)	the sun (*āditya*)
ears (*karṇu*)	hearing (*śrotra*)	directions (*diśā*)
skin (*tvac*)	hairs (*loma*)	plants and trees (*oṣadhivanaspatya*)
heart (*hṛd*)	mind (*manas*)	moon (*candra*)
navel (*nabhi*)	digestive faculty (*apāna*)	death (*mṛtya*)
phallus (*śiśna*)	semen (*reta*)	waters (*āpa*)

Once created, these divinities (*devata*): speech, fire, breath, wind, sight, sun, hearing, directions, hairs, plants and trees, mind, moon, digestive faculty, death, semen and waters, all fall into (*prāpatan*) the great ocean (*mahatyarṇava*) where they experience hunger and thirst. They then ask the *ātman* to find them somewhere to become established (*pratiṣṭhita*) and eat food. They are offered a cow and then a horse but both are deemed to be inadequate. Then the/a *puruṣa* is offered and this is found to be an acceptable home. Each of the principles/deities in the right hand column enters the one from which it was derived and these, in turn, enter into the parts of *puruṣa*'s body from whence they came. Hunger and thirst, however, are then left without an abode, so the *ātman* allows them to enter the *puruṣa* along with the other principles/deities. Finally, the *ātman* produces material form (*mūrti*) from the water(s) (*a/āpa*) and this acts as food.

We are then presented with a version of the contest of the faculties. Food tries to escape being consumed by the *puruṣa*, who tries to seize it with each of his faculties in turn: speech, breath, sight, hearing, skin, mind, generative organ and digestive faculty (*apāna*).[36] It is the digestive faculty alone that is able to seize the food. Then comes a peculiar statement: "Vāyu is the grasper of food, Vāyu is the one who lives on food." Vāyu, of course, is derived from *prāṇa* in the first list so why it is introduced at this point is unclear.

So constituted, the individual *puruṣa* seems to be complete. It is a microcosm of the macrocosm and has the ability, indicated by the list of derivations, to apprehend phenomena and satisfy the needs of hunger and thirst. The *ātman* wonders how (or whether) the *puruṣa*, as it is constituted, can live

without him. He then considers the means by which he could enter this being and dismisses each of the routes listed in columns one and two since he does not identify himself (solely?) with any faculty or part of the body. He thus decides to enter through the door called 'the cleft' (*vidṛti*), located at the crown of the head (*sīman*). Once inside, he perceives 'this very person – '*etam eva puruṣa*' (i.e. himself?) as *brahma tataman*' (just that supreme one). The following verse tells us that this perceiver (the *ātman*) is Indra, whose abode is often stated to be in the right eye.

The purpose of the whole chapter seems to be the presentation of a view which not only makes the self the source of all existence but also makes external phenomena derive from the *puruṣa*. The facts that the *ātman* is the ultimate identity of all the worlds, faculties and phenomena, that he enters the body through the top of head and that he is identified with Indra all remind one of *prāṇa*, which in other contexts does all these things and has all these characteristics.

The final chapter of this *Upaniṣad*, just four verses long, supports this connection. It provides information about the nature of the *ātman*. The sanskrit is not clear, however, and verse one could be either a series of questions and answers or just a series of questions.

Hume points out that all the published texts of this Upaniṣad open with the words *ko 'yam* though Müller, Bohtlingk and Deussen amend it to *ko yam*. Given the context, I would favour the amendation for the issue would then be cast in familiar mould: that of the faculties competing. Hence, verse one would read:

> Who is he whom we worship as the *ātman*? Which one is the *ātman*? [Is it he] by whom one sees, or [he] by whom one hears, or [he] by whom one smells odours, or [he] by whom one speaks speech, or [he] by whom one distinguishes between the sweet and the unsweet?

The impled answer is 'None of these', and this would certainly fit with the conclusions of all other similar competitions. However, instead of straightforward answers, verse two provides a list of mental phenomena, all of which are stated to be names of intelligence (*prajñāna*). Verse three then informs us that this *prajñāna* is everything. It is Brahman, Indra, Prajāpati and all the gods. It is the five elements, the foundation (*pratiṣṭhita*) of all things, the guide or eye (*netra*) of all things. The final verse tells us that 'he',[37] by means of the intelligence-self (*prajñātman*), left this world and, having obtained all his desires in the world of heaven, became immortal (*svarge loka sarvān kāmān aptvāmṛtaḥ samabhavat*).[38]

The *prajñātman* thus seems to be the self referred to in verse one. Such a conclusion would put this text in agreement with the other *Upaniṣad* of the *Ṛgveda*, the *Kauṣītaki*, in employing the term *prajñātman* to refer to the supreme self. There, of course, the *prajñātman* is explicitly equated with *prāṇa* and such an equation would not be out of character here. If so, we see,

once again, that the concept of *prāṇa* has been employed as a kind of blueprint for the presentation of *ātman* as the supreme principle.

Mait. U. 6.1–3 and 8

> He (the self) bears himself in two ways, as he who is breath (*praṇa*) and he who is the sun (*āditya*). Yonder sun, verily is the outer self; the inner self is breath ... There are, assuredly, two forms of Brahman, the formed and the formless. Now that which is formed is unreal (*asatya*); that which is formless is the real (*satya*); that is the Brahman, that is the light. That which is the light is the sun ... The self (*ātman*) is the lord (*īśāna*), the beneficent (*śambhu*), the real (*bhava*), the terrible (*rudra*), the lord of creation (*prajāpati*), the creator of all (*viśvasṛk*), the golden germ (*hiraṇyagarbha*), truth (*satya*), life (*prāṇa*), spirit (*haṃsa*), the ordainer (*śāstā*), the pervader (*viṣṇu*), Nārāyaṇa [abode of man], the shining (*arka*), [the] vivifier (*savita*), the upholder (*dhātā*), the maker (*vidhātā*), sovereign (*samrāj*) Indra, the moon (*indur*) ... He who has all forms, the golden one, who is all-knowing, the final goal, the only light, who gives heat, the thousand rayed, abiding in a hundred places, the life (*prāṇa*) of creatures, the yonder sun, rises.[39]

Once again, the concept of self (*ātman*) as it is presented in this material appears to be employed as a synonym for the unitary *prāṇa*. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* Agni is often put in the same role as the unitary *prāṇa*. Hence, in *Ś.B.* 10.3.3 1–8 we are told that Agni manifests in the body as speech, eye (sight), mind (mentation), ear (hearing) and 'the agni who is everything here': *prāṇa*. This is exactly the kind of statement which, elsewhere, describes the manifestation of the unitary *prāṇa* in the body. The first four pass into *prāṇa* during sleep and emerge again on waking. Cosmically, fire corresponds to speech, the sun to the eye, the moon to the mind, the ear to the quarters and Vāyu to *prāṇa*. Similar correspondences are found throughout the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Numerous references make Agni, Vāyu, (or *prāṇa*) and Āditya the three principal manifestations of Agni[40] and in other places there are statements about Agni which exactly parallel those made about the *ātman* in the above-quoted *Upaniṣadic* text, namely that Agni is the sun (*āditya*) in the cosmos and breath (*prāṇa*) in the individual.

In this *Upaniṣadic* passage the sun (*āditya*) is the formless (*amūrta*) and real or true (*satya*) aspect (*rūpa*) of Brahman. In *B.A.U.* 2.3.1–6 we have a similar account. Here the formless (*amūrta*) and real or true (*sat*) aspects (*rūpa*) of Brahman are *prāṇa*. Taking all this information together it is clear that although it is not explicit in the text the author is drawing on a range of established associations and equivalances where the unitary Agni, the unitary *prāṇa* and the *ātman* can all be equated. This Agni/*prāṇa*/*ātman* is the real, unformed Brahman, the supreme principle which manifests as a variety of cosmic and individualized phenomena. In the final analysis, however, all these manifestations are unreal (*asat* or *asatya*).

Kena Up. 1

Brahman is described as the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the eye of the eye and the *prāṇa* of the *prāṇa* (1.2). Brahman is not expressed through speech but is that by which speech is expressed; is not thought by the mind but is that by which the mind thinks; is not seen by the eye but is that by which the eye sees; is not heard by the ear but is that by which the ear hears; is not breathed by the breath (*prāṇa*) but is that by which the breath breathes. A later verse of the same *Upaniṣad* (3.1) tells us that Brahman once conquered for the *devas* and they gloried in his conquest (a reference to *B.A.U.* 1.3 and *C.U.* 1.2. 1–14 where *prāṇa* defeats the *asuras*?). It would appear, therefore, that here again we have an example of the *prāṇa* concept being employed as a 'model' for the description of Brahman.

Conclusion

Overall, I think the foregoing analyses demonstrate that, in some *Upaniṣadic* circles at least, the concepts of *ātman* and Brahman were developed on the basis of already existing conceptions of *prāṇa*. I am not claiming, however, that *Upaniṣadic* accounts of *ātman* and Brahman are always to be understood in this way. Some *Upaniṣads*, such as the *Īśā* and the *Māṇḍūkya*, do not mention *prāṇa* at all and it could hardly be argued that their presentation of *ātman* and Brahman are derived from descriptions of *prāṇa*. The same applies to the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* which mentions *prāṇa* only once (2.9). Despite these qualifications it is obvious, in the light of the foregoing that the characterization of *prāṇa* as found in the writings of Bādārayaṇa, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and other classical Vedāntins constitutes a far from accurate interpretation of the *Upaniṣads*.

Just why these influential Vedānta teachers were so rigorous in their denial of any equation between *ātman*/Brahman and *prāṇa* is a complex issue in itself but one explanation which links with later developments is that the *prāṇa* concept is not philosophically user-friendly. It has already been noted how the meaning of the term *prāṇa* changes according to the level of description being employed, and this makes it difficult for philosophers to use it in a precise way. It should be mentioned that the same was true of *ātman* in the pre-*Upaniṣadic* literature, where it had a range of meanings from trunk, through body to self, breath and spirit. By the time of the *Upaniṣads* though, it had lost its more physical meanings.

Prāṇa is also a dynamic reality, constantly moving, constantly changing. For the later Vedāntins such an entity could not be truly real. For them, only that which did not change could be real. Linked with this is the fact that the Vedānta tradition came increasingly under the influence of the Sāṃkhya philosophy. Although the author of the *Brahmasūtra* and theologians such as Śaṅkara frequently criticize the Sāṃkhya school for

being unorthodox, a general pattern that can be discerned is that the later the Vedāntin text the more Sāṃkhya concepts are assimilated.

This process can be traced back at least as far as the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, and there is plenty of evidence from the great epic, the *Mahābhārata*, that *Vedic* versions of Sāṃkhya existed alongside non-*Vedic* ones. The former were promulgated by brahmins; subscribed to the view that *puruṣa* was single and unitary; incorporated the *Vedic* gods into their systems; and reckoned that a householder could gain release as well as a renouncer. The latter criticized the brahmins for conducting animal sacrifices and thus breaking the code of *ahiṃsā*; subscribed to the view that there were many *puruṣas*; made no reference to gods in their descriptions of the world; and emphasized the importance of renunciation.

The Sāṃkhya cosmology is very orderly. One *tattva* (principle) emerges from another in a pre-determined order; the faculties (*indriya*) are neatly divided into two sets of five: the faculties of perception (*buddhīndriyas*) on the one hand, and the faculties of action (*karmendriyas*) on the other; the *puruṣa* of Sāṃkhya is immutable, not subject to change.

Sāṃkhya thus appeals to an orderly philosophical mind and its highest principle, *puruṣa*, is immutable. In fact, later Vedāntins tend to take *Upaniṣadic* references to *prāṇa*s as references to the *indriyas* of Sāṃkhya. However, scrutiny of *Upaniṣadic* passages referring to *prāṇa* reveals that the lists of *prāṇa*s in the *Upaniṣads* never include the *karmendriyas* of Sāṃkhya. This shows just how far the later Vedāntins were prepared to go in the direction of misrepresenting *Upaniṣadic* teachings in the service of their own ideas.

A study of references to *prāṇa* in the *Brahmasūtra* and in the writings of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, the two most influential Vedānta teachers, reveals much the same thing. As mentioned earlier, the primary task of the author or authors of the *Brahmasūtra* was to deal with problematic passages from the *Upaniṣads*, that is, passages that were difficult to interpret within the framework of emerging Vedānta philosophy.

Most of these problematic passages dealing with *prāṇa* are, in fact, those presenting *prāṇa* as the ultimate principle or where *prāṇa* seems to be the source of mentation or cognition. In all cases, the aim of Bādarāyaṇa, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja is the same: to claim that the *Upaniṣadic* teachers did not mean what they said when they described *prāṇa* as the source of everything or identified it with *ātman* or *brāhman*. Consequently, the literature of the Vedānta school (except the *Upaniṣads* themselves) has little to say on the concept of *prāṇa*. When it is mentioned it is usually to comment that *prāṇa* is a purely phenomenal principle which has nothing to do with sentience or cognition.

With these considerations in mind, a rather bold and provocative conclusion seems appropriate. It is this. On the subject of *prāṇa* the great Vedānta commentators wilfully misrepresented the teachings of the

Upaniṣads. By doing so they rendered a great disservice to those who turn to them for guidance when seeking to understand the message of those ancient scriptures.

Notes

1. Deutsch, 1969, p. 9.
2. See, for example, their commentaries on *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.23(24); 1.1.28–31 (29–32); 1.3.39 (40–4) and 1.4.16–18. Numbers in parentheses refer to Rāmānuja's arrangement
3. Ewing, 1903, p. 9.
4. Whitney, 1905, pp. 632–3.
5. Keith, 1969 [1925], p. 205.
6. *Op. cit.* p. 201.
7. *Op. cit.* p. 206.
8. See *loc. cit.*
9. *Loc. cit.*
10. *Loc. cit.*
11. *Loc. cit* fn.
12. *Op. cit.* p. 208.
13. *Op. cit.* p. 213.
14. *Op. cit.* p. 220.
15. Ewing, 1903, p. 7.
16. *Loc. cit.*
17. Eggeling, 1882, (1) p. 121.
18. *Idem*, 1895, (4) p. 144.
19. *Idem*, 1900, (5) p. 3 cf. 5.2.4.10 and 11.1.2.3.
20. 7.5.1.22.
21. 1.3.2.3, 8.3.4.5, 10.2.6.15 and 10.3.1.5.
22. 8.2.2.8.
23. 8.1.4.1, 8.7.2.14, 8.7.3.6.
24. 6.3.1.13 and 15.
25. 7.1.1.24.
26. Keith, 1969 [1925]. p. 220.
27. Radhakrishnan, 1953, pp. 468–83.
28. *Op. cit.* p. 487.
29. Radhakrishnan, 1953, p. 791. This passage makes the existence of the worlds (*loka*) dependent on the gods (*deva*) which, in turn, are dependent on the *prāṇas* (*prāṇa, apāna,* etc.) which, in turn, are dependent on *prāṇa/prajñātman*. Such an arrangement reverses the common *Upaniṣadic* pattern of emphasizing cosmology over psychology by making the cosmos (the *adhidaivata* realm) dependent on the individual (the *adhyātma* realm).
30. *Op. cit.* p. 163.
31. *Op. cit.* p. 166 (slightly amended).
32. My translation.
33. Radhakrishnan, 1953, p. 246.
34. *Op. cit.* p. 253.
35. *Op. cit.* p. 515.
36. We may note here that whilst speech, breath, etc. all come from column two, skin and generative organ come from column one. Furthermore, the order of digestive faculty and generative organ are reversed in the 'seizing' list. Exactly why skin replaces hairs here is not clear. Radhakrishnan suggests that 'touch' is what is implied. The reason why touch, which would have been the most logical entry in column two, was initially displaced by hairs was probably that the author (or redactor) wanted to get '*oṣadhivanaspatya*' into column three and this would seem to be a peculiar derivation from touch. The reason for the reversal of *śiśna* and *apāna* is more obvious. The writer wanted to end the list with the only successful faculty. The reason for the original order would seem to be the simple physical progression from higher to lower: heart, navel, and phallus.

37. *Puruṣa* or *ātman*, not, as many commentators suggest, *Vāmadeva.*
38. Radhakrishnan, 1953, p. 524.
39. *Op. cit.* pp. 816–7 and 821–2.
40. e.g. 6.3.3.16; 6.7.4.4; 7.1.1.22–23; 8.5.2.8; 9.1.1.23; 9.2.1.21 and 10.6.2.1–11.

Abbreviations

A.Ā.	*Aitareya Āraṇyaka*
A.U.	*Aitareya Upaniṣad*
B.A.U.	*Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
C.U.	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
Kaṭh. U.	*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*
Kauṣ. U.	*Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*
Mait. U.	*Maitri Upaniṣad*
Muṇḍ. U	*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*
P.U.	*Praśna Upaniṣad*
Ś.B.	*Śatapatha Brāhmana*
T.U.	*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*

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The Oral Composition and Transmission of Early Buddhist Texts

Mark Allon, St John's College, Cambridge

It is generally agreed that early Buddhist literature, of which the Pāli texts of the Theravāda canon are the most numerous and best preserved examples, was composed and transmitted orally.[1] This is considered to be the case for the following reasons:

1. There is no reference to writing or writing materials in the principal Pāli *nikāyas*,[2] though there are many references to learning and reciting discourses (see below).[3]
2. Although there are a few passages in the Pāli *Vinayapiṭaka* which indicate that the art of writing was known at the time when these *Vinaya* texts were put into their present form, these do not refer to texts and their preservation.[4]
3. Despite detailed rules governing the use of all items used by monks and nuns, the *Vinaya* has no rules governing the use of writing materials.[5]
4. There is no archaeological evidence for the use of writing in India during the early phase of Buddhism, that is, before the time of Aśoka[6] – although this view may have to be revised in the light of recent finds in Sri Lanka of Brāhmī characters on potsherds dating from this period.[7]
5. Finally, many of the stylistic features of these texts indicate an oral origin.[8]

As just noted, there are many passages in Pāli canonical texts depicting monks and nuns learning and reciting the Buddha's teachings and discourses, which seem to indicate that during the Buddha's lifetime material was formulated so that it could be remembered and recited. In a passage occurring in the *Vinaya* and *Udāna*,[9] for example, it is reported that the Buddha asked the monk Soṇa to expound the Dhamma. In response Soṇa

recited the *Aṭṭhakavagga* (*sabbān' eva aṭṭhakavaggikāni sarena abhāsi*), the name now given to a group of verse *suttas* in the *Suttanipāta*.[10] In the *Vinaya* mention is made of monks who are expert in the *suttas* chanting a *sutta* (*suttantikehi suttantaṃ saṃgāyantehi*).[11] In the *Saṅgītisutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* a distinction is made between the Buddha teaching the Dhamma, a monk teaching the Dhamma to others as he has heard and learnt it, and a monk reciting the Dhamma as he has heard and learnt it (*sajjhāyaṃ karoti*).[12] In the *Suttavibhaṅga* of the *Vinaya* there is a particularly interesting *pācittiya* rule which prohibits those who have not taken the higher ordination from being taught the Dhamma by being made to recite it word by word (or "line by line", *padaso dhammaṃ vāceyya*).[13] The formulation of this rule arose because certain monks were teaching some laymen in this manner. The old commentary takes this as a particular form of recitation, almost in the manner of Vedic chanting. The commentator Buddhaghosa (Sp 741) interprets this passage as referring to a particular manner of reciting verse. Although it is somewhat obscure, it certainly seems to imply that students were made to learn fixed texts by heart. Again, there are many references to reciting the *Pāṭimokkha*. On one occasion, for example, the Buddha refused to recite the *Pāṭimokkha* because the assembly of monks was not pure.[14] And finally, there are many passages which refer to monks being learned, having heard much, grasping and remembering the Dhamma, and so on.[15]

Despite these references, we do not know what material was actually composed during this period, nor the form and manner in which it was composed. Nor do we understand the relationship of this material to the original discourses, or the relationship of these initial compositions to Buddhist texts as we have them today.[16]

All schools of Buddhism agree that soon after the death of the Buddha a council, or *saṅgīti*, was held to confirm and rehearse the Buddha's teaching.[17] Some schools also maintain that *saṅgītis* were held at other times in the history of the Buddhist community. Also, the Theravāda tradition, for its part, considers that after the first *saṅgīti* a tradition of specialisation arose whereby groups of monks, called *bhāṇakas*, began to specialise in the knowledge and recitation of particular collections of texts.[18]

What material was rehearsed at the first *saṅgīti* (and at those which followed) and whether, in fact, fixed texts were "recited" on these occasions is likewise uncertain. We do not yet understand the way in which the *bhāṇaka* system worked, nor its impact on the material being transmitted.[19]

The Theravāda tradition maintains that its texts were first written down in the 1st century BCE in Sri Lanka, while information about the use of writing in the other Buddhist schools is generally lacking.[20] The Theravāda account, occurring first in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, is extremely brief, consisting of two verses only.[21] We do not know whether writing was utilised as an aid to composition or transmission before this time; but it has been suggested that there is some evidence for a manuscript tradition in the case of certain

texts before this date.[22] Again, we do not yet fully understand what impact writing, or the writing down of the canon, had on the material and its transmission.[23]

The period of oral composition and transmission can probably be measured in centuries. R. Gombrich has suggested "three to four centuries".[24] But as S. Collins has argued, the Buddhist tradition also remained in various ways an oral/aural one, despite the introduction of writing; that is, the monks and nuns recited and listened to oral as well as written texts.[25]

With early Buddhist texts being composed and transmitted orally it is not surprising that they exhibit so many striking features which appear alien to the modern reader and which, as stated earlier, are generally taken to be indicative of the oral status of this material. Stylistic features alone do not prove that a given text was originally oral, for written texts can, for various reasons, deliberately mimic the style of texts belonging to an earlier, oral phase of the tradition. Besides, the impact of the new medium on the style of the texts being composed would not have been immediate.[26] But as there are other reasons for taking this to be an oral literature, we can regard the stylistic features of these texts as being, at least in part, a product of their oral origins.

For some decades now a field of study has developed in the West which has attempted to understand the way in which oral literature is composed and identify its peculiar characteristics. Particularly important to the foundation of this field were Milman Parry's studies of Homeric epic verse.[27] Parry argued that many of the stylistic features of these texts indicated that this literature had its origins in an oral tradition, and he developed the theory that in an oral epic tradition the poet creates his poems as he performs with the aid of what he referred to as formulas and themes, which are the building blocks of the performance.[28] In consequence, every performance of the poem was a new creation, although each version may have been very similar. In an attempt to confirm these ideas Parry and A. B. Lord conducted field work in what was then Yugoslavia where a living tradition of oral epic verse survived. After Parry's death, Lord continued these studies and further developed this theory. Most importantly, he emphasised the improvisatory nature of oral performance, regarding "oral" to be "formulaically improvised".[29] He therefore argued against the conception of fixed, memorised texts in oral traditions, stating, for example, that "sacred texts which must be preserved word for word, if there be such, could not be *oral* in any except the most literal sense".[30] In response to this, some have considered that the rote learning of a lengthy text and its verbatim repetition is the product of a culture which knows writing for, they argue, it is only through a fixed, written text that we can have the notion of word-for-word fixity.[31] But Lord's tendency to see his model as universally valid and his attributing of particularly restricted meanings to certain terms have been criticised by a number of scholars.[32] The Parry-Lord model may

describe what occurs in the Homeric or Yugoslav traditions, or even be appropriate to oral epic traditions in general, but oral traditions are diverse, and what holds true for one may not be appropriate for another.

Many factors can influence the character of an oral literature and its method of composition and transmission: the nature of the information being relayed; the attitude towards this material and the extent to which accuracy is required; the character of the performers or composers, their status in society, the type of training they have undergone and the circumstances under which they perform; the nature of the audience and its expectations and therefore its demands on the performer or performers; the medium used (verse or prose) and whether the performance requires musical accompaniment.

The Buddhist and Yugoslav-Homeric traditions differ in virtually all of these factors. In epic verse traditions the medium is verse, and for the most part, epics portray the lives and activities of heroes. They are often performed to musical accompaniment, and in the Yugoslav case at least, they are primarily performed for entertainment. Also, performances are very much public events and the audience has an important influence on what is performed, or at least, on what episodes are performed and the degree to which each is elaborated. The status of the performers is also particular: they are bards or poets who perform individually, not communally, and they have usually acquired their performance skills through a long period of training. In contrast, in the early Buddhist tradition prose is by far the most dominant medium. The function of the literature is to preserve the teaching of a religious leader and the rules deemed necessary to guide the conduct of the members of that religious community. The information being transmitted is often complex, consisting of descriptions of practices and detailed analyses of concepts and psychological processes, all of which require a high degree of accuracy.[33] The "performers" were monks and nuns, and increasingly they were members of monastic institutions. They came from diverse social backgrounds: some were brahmans who presumably had undergone their traditional training, others would have had no formal training in literary/performance skills. And finally, material was performed communally, as well as individually and privately.

This last factor seems to be one of the most overlooked. Yet it is particularly important, for communal or group recitation or performance requires fixed wording. It is not possible for more than one individual to perform at the same time in the manner described by Parry and Lord without producing utter chaos, for in that method each individual creates his compositions anew each time he performs.

The first application of the ideas of Parry and Lord to early Buddhist literature was L. S. Cousins' article "Pali oral literature" (1983). Cousins argued that in the earliest phase in the production of Buddhist literature the monks performed accounts of the Buddha's discourses and presented his

teaching in the manner proposed by the Parry-Lord model, that is, with "a strong improvisatory element" (p. 9). With time this material then came to be fixed due to its religious authority (p. 6). The differences between accounts of the same event or teaching found in different collections within the Pāli canon and between the parallel material belonging to different schools are evidence for an initially improvisatory stage, for such variations, he states, "are too frequent to arise from the natural variation of a manuscript tradition or even from a rigidly memorised oral tradition" (pp. 5–6).[34]

R. Gombrich, in a paper entitled "How Mahāyāna began" (1990b),[35] argued against the improvisatory stage proposed by Cousins, seeing early Buddhist texts as "deliberate compositions which were then committed to memory, and later systematically transmitted to pupils" (p. 24), because, he states, "the whole purpose of the enterprise ... was to preserve the Buddha's words" (p. 22). Further:

> The early Buddhists wished to preserve the words of their great teacher, texts very different in character from the general run of oral literature, for they presented logical and sometimes complex arguments. The precise wording mattered" (p. 21).[36]

An investigation of the stylistic features of early Buddhist texts can, I think, make an important contribution to this debate.[37] As part of my Ph.D. research a number of the most prominent stylistic features of the prose portions of Pāli canonical *sutta* texts, and more specifically, of the prose of the *Dīghanikāya*, the first book of the *Suttapiṭaka*, were investigated.[38] The following discussion is based on this research.[39]

One of the most dominant characteristics of the prose portions of Pāli canonical *sutta* texts is the use of standardised phrases or passages to express or depict a given concept, action or event. These standardised phrases have been variously called "formulas", "clichés", "stock expressions", "stock phrases" and "stereotyped phrases". For the most part I will use the term "formula".[40]

The narrative portions of Pāli *sutta* texts contain numerous passages which depict someone approaching another person, and the phrases used to depict these approaches are formulaic. The material encountered is extensive and diverse, and I will therefore restrict myself here to a discussion of those approach-formulas which are based on the unit *yena...ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā*, "*x* approached *y*, having approached (he did such and such)".

The material in the *Dīghanikāya* can be divided into two groups. The formulas of the first group depict someone approaching the Buddha, a monk or another person, and a monk approaching the Buddha or another monk. The simplest formula within this group depicts the approach of the visitor, then his or her interaction, usually verbal, with the person approached. In the more complicated formulas the visitor approaches,

shows some form of respect, adopts a particular posture (standing or sitting), then speaks with the person approached. A particular range of fixed units of meaning is employed within each division of this overall structure to construct distinct formulas. Which units of meaning are employed, and hence which formula type and specific formula is used, depends on the narrator, the classification of the person approaching and the person approached, their attitude towards each other, and the purpose of the visit.

So, for example, when a brahman is depicted approaching a king, the following combination of units will be used:

> (Then)[41] + the brahman approached the king. Having approached + he said this to the king.[42]

In contrast, the formula used to depict a brahman approaching the Buddha in order to question him will be:

> (Then) + the brahman approached the Bhagavat. Having approached, + he exchanged greetings with the Bhagavat, and having exchanged agreeable and courteous talk (with him), + he sat down to one side. + Seated to one side, the brahman + said this to the Bhagavat.[43]

This is characterised by respect being shown and the showing of this particular form of respect, by the brahman sitting down rather than standing, and by the brahman speaking first. There are also certain forms of address associated with this interaction.

Again, the following combination of units will be used to depict a monk approaching the Buddha when he has been summoned by him:

> (Then) + the monk approached the Bhagavat. Having approached, + having paid homage to the Bhagavat, + he sat down to one side. + To the monk who was seated to one side + the Bhagavat said this.[44]

In contrast to the previous formula, this is characterised by the monk showing this particular form of respect and by the Buddha speaking first. Again, there are certain forms of address encountered in such an approach.

The second group of formulas depict the Buddha approaching someone and a monk approaching someone other than the Buddha or another monk. Here the situation is quite different. Not only do the structures of these formulas differ from those of the previous group, but these formulas also utilise a completely different range of fixed units of meaning. Although the factors which determine the use of particular fixed units of meaning, and hence the overall formula, are the same, their relative importance differs markedly from the first group. Here the purpose of the approach is the fundamental determinant of the formula used, with the wording of approaches of different purposes differing greatly from each other. We have in effect "purpose built" formulas.

So, for example, the formula used to depict the Buddha visiting an ascetic is:

> Then the Bhagavat approached the ascetic. Then the ascetic said this to the Bhagavat: 'May the Bhagavat come, venerable sir. Welcome to the Bhagavat, venerable sir. It is long, venerable sir, since the Bhagavat took the opportunity to come here. May the Bhagavat, venerable sir, be seated. This seat has been prepared.' The Bhagavat sat down on the prepared seat. Having taken a lower seat, the ascetic sat down to one side. The Bhagavat said this to the ascetic who was seated to one side.[45]

But the formula used to depict the Buddha attending a donor's meal is:

> Then the Bhagavat, dressing in the morning and taking his bowl and robe, approached the house of the brahman together with the community of monks. Having approached, he sat down on a prepared seat. Then the brahman personally satisfied and served the community of monks headed by the Buddha with the finest hard and soft food. Then, when the Bhagavat had finished his meal and had washed his bowl and hands, the brahman took a lower seat and sat down to one side. The Bhagavat said this to the brahman who was seated to one side.[46]

The formulas of this category are generally characterised by the following features: (1) the Buddha or monk is depicted getting dressed and taking his bowl and robe when the visit is a public one; (2) the approach is to the place of the person who is approached rather than to the actual person; (3) the Buddha or monk does not show respect to the person visited; rather, some gesture of respect or subordination is shown by the person approached; (4) the Buddha or monk sits down on a prepared seat; and finally, (5) such approaches usually occur in *sutta*-narrator passages. Features 2, 3 and 4 tend to subordinate the person being approached to the Buddha or monk who is approaching.

The study of the material in the *Dīghanikāya* shows that the wording of passages which depict the common event of someone approaching another person has been standardised in this text to the extent that only a limited range of stock phrases or formulas is exhibited.[47] These formulas have set structures and are composed of a variety of possible fixed units of meaning. As mentioned, which units are employed, and hence which formula type and specific formula is used, depends on certain factors. Given a knowledge of these determining factors, the wording of a particular approach is, in the majority of cases, predictable.[48] At minimum, this indicates that there is an overall homogeneity to the narrative portions of this collection of *suttas*.[49] Whether there was a tendency to use a standardised diction from the beginning, or whether standardisation was undertaken at the great *saṅgītis*, or councils, or later by the *bhāṇaka* tradition or when the canon was written down, is yet to be determined.

There are two principal, alternative methods for the composition of oral literature and therefore for early Buddhist texts. The first is that proposed by Parry and Lord for oral epic verse and taken by Lord as the only method possible in oral cultures. In such an improvisatory method no two performances are exactly alike. If the early phase of Buddhist literature was one of composition-in-performance, then those texts which we consider to be representative of this period must be seen to be 'frozen' versions of a particular performance.[50] The second method entails the composition of a fixed text which is then memorised and transmitted verbatim.[51]

The standardised diction outlined here can be seen as an aid to composition within both of these methods: whenever a particular approach needed to be portrayed, the wording was already available. In other words, these formulas acted as prefabricated building-blocks.[52] In addition to this, the use of a standardised and predictable diction would also have aided the learning by heart and recitation of a large body of fixed material; that is, within a tradition of the composition and transmission of fixed texts this feature would have a mnemonic function.[53]

This research on the formulaic diction of these texts becomes particularly interesting when the wording of passages which depict similar concepts, actions or events found in different *Suttapiṭaka* and *Vinayapiṭaka* texts are compared. For example, the event of Māra approaching the Buddha towards the end of the Buddha's life is found in the *Dīghanikāya*, *Udāna*, *Saṃyuttanikāya*, and *Aṅguttaranikāya*.[54] In the *Dīghanikāya* and *Udāna* occurrences we have the fullest formula with Māra approaching the Buddha, standing to one side, then speaking:

> Then, not long after the venerable Ānanda had departed, Māra the evil one approached the Bhagavat. Having approached, he stood to one side. Standing to one side, Māra the evil one said this to the Bhagavat.[55]

In the *Saṃyuttanikāya* we have a briefer formula with no mention of Māra standing to one side:

> Then, not long after the venerable Ānanda had departed, Māra the evil one approached the Bhagavat. Having approached, he said this.[56]

But in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* the passage is so brief as not even to mention the approach, merely reading:

> Then, not long after Ānanda had departed, Māra the evil one said this to the Bhagavat.[57]

Here, as in other instances, it is seen that the *Dīghanikāya and Udāna* are the most wordy texts. This means that, although the *suttas* of the *Dīghanikāya* are longer than those to the *Aṅguttaranikāya* primarily because of differences in their structure, the use of a more elaborate and detailed diction by the former is certainly a contributing factor.

We saw earlier that the formula used in the *Dīghanikāya* to depict the Buddha or a monk approaching an ascetic is characterised by the ascetic showing respect to the Buddha or monk and not vice versa, by the ascetic addressing the Buddha or monk in a reverential manner, and by the ascetic taking a lower seat; all of which tends to subordinate the ascetic to the Buddha or monk. Further research shows that this formula is particular to the *Dīgha-* and *Majjhima-nikāyas*. In contrast, the *Saṃyuttanikāya*, *Aṅguttaranikāya* and *Vinayapiṭaka* use a simpler formula which depicts the Buddha or monk greeting the ascetic, sitting down to one side, then speaking to him.[58] When depicting such encounters with ascetics, the authors of the *Saṃyutta*, *Aṅguttara* and *Vinaya* seemed to have considered it unnecessary to portray the Buddha or monk being honoured in such an exaggerated manner.

Again, differences exist between the various canonical texts in their wording of the "going to an invited meal" approach-formula mentioned earlier. In contrast to the previous example, the same basic formula is used in each text, but the syntax of the fixed units of meaning and presence of particular units differs from text to text. For example, in the *Dīghanikāya* and *Udāna* we have the Buddha approaching the donor's house "together with the community of monks" and sitting down, while in the *Majjhimanikāya*, *Aṅguttaranikāya*, *Suttanipāta* and *Vinayapiṭaka* we have the Buddha approaching the donor's house, then sitting down "together with the community of monks"; that is, these latter texts associate the unit "together with the community of monks" with the verb depicting the action of sitting down rather than with the verb portraying the approach.[59] Also, in the *Dīghanikāya*, *Majjhimanikāya*, *Udāna* and *Suttanipāta* we have the donor "taking a lower seat and sitting down to one side" after the meal, while the *Saṃyuttanikāya*, *Aṅguttaranikāya* and *Vinayapiṭaka* fail to include this "taking of a lower seat" phrase.[60]

The situation seems to be quite complex, with a text such as the *Udāna*, for example, following the diction of the *Dīghanikāya* with regard to some formulas, but not others. It is possible that such differences may have resulted from the *bhāṇaka* tradition, or period of specialisation. Alternatively, differences in diction may have resulted from the way in which each text was used by the Buddhist community. In other words, it is possible that different texts were intended for different audiences and had different functions and that their wording was modified accordingly. Or again, in some cases these differences may be due to the different manuscript traditions of these texts. Further research certainly needs to be undertaken to properly identify and understand such differences.

Another common feature of the prose portions of Pāli canonical *sutta* texts is the tendency to proliferate similar word elements and units of meaning to form sequences or "strings". We frequently encounter sequences of two, three or more adjectives or adjectival units qualifying the same noun,

a number of nouns all acting as the subject of the same sentence or as the object of the same verb. We encounter sequences of adverbs modifying the same verb, or a number of parallel verbs occurring together in the same sentence, and so on. Wherever such sequences of parallel word elements or units of meaning occur, they are arranged according to what will be referred to here as the Waxing Syllable Principle; that is, in sequences which consist of similar word elements or units of meaning of an unequal number of syllables, the words or units of meaning of fewer syllables must precede (to use an expanded form of Pāṇini's phraseology, via Caland).[61] For example, in the *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta* we find an ascetic telling the Buddha that he had challenged him "as he was foolish, confused, and unskilled": *yathā-bālena yathā-mūḷhena yathā-akusalena.*[62] This consists of a string of three adverbial expressions. The first has 5 syllables, the second 5 syllables and the third 7 syllables; that is, the pattern is 5+5+7. This arranging of elements according to an increasing syllable length tends to produce a crescendo effect in these sections of the text, and to a certain extent parallels enumeration, another important stylistic feature of this literature.

The exception to this general principle is where a sequence, and especially a long sequence, can or must be divided into groups on the basis of associations in meaning or grammatical or morphological form, in which case the Waxing Syllable Principle only works within each group, restarting again with the next group. For example, the stock description of the lowly-talk engaged in by ascetics,[63] which also occurs in the *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta*, consists of a long list of topics of conversation. This list can be divided into groups on the basis of associations in meaning: *rāja-kathaṃ cora-kathaṃ mahāmatta-kathaṃ*, "talk of kings, thieves and ministers". This has a 4+4+6 syllable pattern. This group is then followed by *senā-kathaṃ bhaya-kathaṃ yuddha-kathaṃ*, "talk of armies, fear and battle" (4+4+4 syllables); *anna-kathaṃ pāna-kathaṃ vattha-kathaṃ sayana-kathaṃ*, "talk of food, drink, clothing and bedding" (4+4+4+5 syllables); *mālā-kathaṃ gandha-kathaṃ ñāti-kathaṃ yāna-kathaṃ*, "talk of garlands, scents, relatives and vehicles" (4+4+4+4 syllables); *gāma-kathaṃ nigama-kathaṃ nagara-kathaṃ janapada-kathaṃ*, "talk of villages, towns, cities and districts" (4+5+5+6). And so on. The pattern of this list so far is thus 4+4+6, 4+4+4, 4+4+4+5, 4+4+4+4, 4+5+5+6.

This ordering principle is not only apparent in the more obvious sequences of adjectives and adjectival units, nouns and noun phrases, adverbs and verbs, but it also seems to be operational in the ordering of parallel units of meaning which occur in different, but nonetheless closely associated, clauses, sentences and paragraphs, and in the ordering of sequences of parallel sentences or semi-independent units of meaning, as well as a number of other structures, such as those involving *saddhiṃ*. A number of examples encountered in the material studied have problematic patterns. Solutions to these can often be found if certain amendments are

accepted – a *svarabhakti* vowel not scanned or a word thought to be a later insertion omitted – or if only the immediately parallel units are compared. It also seems that conceptual considerations or the desire to produce a particular word play may occasionally override the Waxing Syllable Principle. A few examples await plausible solutions.

It is particularly common in these sequences for the component elements, and especially the initial members of the sequence, to share sound and metrical similarities.[64] In the above example of *yathā-bālena yathā-mūḷhena yathā-akusalena*, it is seen that, apart from the obvious sound similarities due to *yathā-* being the first member of each compound, the endings of all three are virtually identical: *-lena*/*-ḷhena*/*-lena*. Again, the first two compounds differ only in their core syllables: *-bā-* and *-mū-*, which are both labial consonants in conjunction with long vowels. The two initial compounds of this sequence therefore share the same metrical patterns and are virtually identical in sound. The *-ū-* of the second member (*-mūḷhena*) is also echoed in *-akusalena* of the third. Hence, there is a tendency in these texts to proliferate similar word elements and units of meaning, that is to expand the wording, while at the same time there is a tendency to bring this expanded wording closer together by choosing words which share sound and metrical similarities.

This phenomenon of ordering similar word elements according to their syllable lengths has been known for some time, but an analysis of the nature and extent of its application within Pāli texts has not been undertaken before.[65]

The proliferation of similar word elements and units of meaning and the ordering of the member elements of such sequences according to the Waxing Syllable Principle, which thus produces an overall crescendo effect, tends to give a rhythm and homogeneity to this material. This rhythm and homogeneity is then greatly enhanced when, as is frequently the case, the member elements also share sound and metrical similarities. The presence of rhythmical patterns in prose, and especially in long prose texts, must have been extremely important to those who performed or recited this material, and may be functionally parallel to the rhythm produced in verse by metre.

As with the use of formulas, the structures briefly discussed here would, by acting as an organisational principle, function as aids to composition within both of the compositional methods outlined above. However, within a tradition of the composition of fixed texts, which are designed to be memorised, this combination of stylistic features would also have functioned as a mnemonic aid, for it is surely easier to remember a sequence of words arranged in this manner according to syllable length. Similarly, it is easier to remember two different words when they share sound similarities and have the same metrical patterns. And again, the presence of some form of rhythm would also have facilitated the memorisation and recitation of this

material. But whichever method we consider to be that utilised for the composition of these texts, it is seen that the choice of words and their arrangement was heavily influenced by the fact that these texts were composed and transmitted orally.

The final stylistic characteristic that will be discussed here is repetition. By repetition I mean the repetition of sentences, passages or whole sections of the text, and the repetition of set structures. This discussion is based on the study of repetition in one *sutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, the *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta*, the 25th *sutta* of this collection.

In order to establish the degree to which this particular *sutta* is repetitive, the text of the PTS edition was scanned into a word processor and all abbreviated passages were reconstructed. It was then possible to establish the word count for the complete *sutta* and for those sections which were being repeated, and hence to calculate what percentage of the text was repetitive.[66]

In order to quantify repetition, the level at which the repetition is occurring within the text and the type of repetition involved must be established. Repetition can occur at a number of levels. A passage is repetitive at a primary level when it does not form part of a passage which is itself repeated within the text. If it does, then it is repetition at a secondary level. Sometimes repetition at a tertiary level is discernible.

In this study five categories or types of quantifiable repetition were established. They are: Verbatim Repetition (VR), Repetition with Minor Modifications (RMM), Repetition with Important Modifications (RIM), Repetition of Structure Type-1 (RS-1) and Repetition of Structure Type-2 (RS-2).

In Verbatim Repetition a passage is repeated word for word with no modifications needing to be made by the one who recites or performs this material. For example, the stock description of the lowly-talk engaged in by ascetics mentioned earlier is repeated verbatim four times in this *sutta*, representing about 5% (4.5%) of the text. Or a long passage which describes three stages of what the Buddha considers to be true ascetic practice, and which represents about 6% of the text, is repeated verbatim three times, making up about 17% of the *sutta*. In total 30% of the *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta* involves Verbatim Repetition at a primary level.

Passages which are repeated with alteration to only a small proportion of their wording were classified as Repetition with Minor Modifications. For example, it is not uncommon to form the opposite of a passage expressing a positive or negative state by merely repeating that passage and adding or omitting certain prefixes or particles.[67] Just under 35% (34.5%) of this *sutta* involves this kind of repetition on a primary level.

The third category, Repetition with Important Modifications, involves repetition of a passage, but with important changes to the wording, whether in syntax, grammatical number, tense or person, or enlargement

or contraction of the wording. Material of this category represents about 4% (3.8%) of the *sutta* studied.

Two types of repetition of structure were also established. In the first type a structure is repeated along with virtually all of its wording, but with key elements replaced to produce differences in meaning. So, for example, in the common passage which depicts the practice of the four *brahmavihāras*, or divine abidings, the same structure and wording is repeated four times, first for loving kindness (*mettā*), then for compassion (*karuṇā*), then sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and finally, for equanimity (*upekhā*).[68] In this way each repetition differs by only one word.

In many passages of this class, the elements which differ in each repetition share morphological, sound or metrical similarities, or similarities in structure (or some combination of these), thereby minimising the impact of the changes being made. For example, in this *sutta*, after defeating the ascetic Nigrodha in debate, the Buddha criticises him for not having the following thought:

> Enlightened (*buddho*) the Bhagavat teaches the Dhamma for enlightenment (*bodhāya*); tamed, or controlled (*danto*), the Bhagavat teaches the Dhamma for control (*damathāya*); calmed (*santo*), the Bhagavat teaches the Dhamma for calm (*samathāya*); crossed over (*tiṇṇo*), the Bhagavat teaches the Dhamma for crossing over (*taraṇāya*); extinguished (*parinibbuto*), the Bhagavat teaches the Dhamma for extinguishing (*parinibbānāya*).[69]

The initial element of each parallel sentence (*buddho*, *danto*, *santo*, *tiṇṇo*, *parinibbuto*) is a past participle. The first four have the same number of syllables and equal metrical patterns, and sound similarities are evident at least in *danto* and *santo*. In the second group of elements which differ in each repetition, *damathāya* and *samathāya* are morphologically parallel, share the same number of syllables and have the same metrical pattern. They differ, in fact, only in their initial letter. Similarly, the last two elements in this group, *taraṇāya* and *parinibbānāya*, are morphologically similar. In this way, the elements which differ in meaning within each repeated structure appear similar in outward form. The effort involved in making the required modifications is thereby minimised for the reciter.

A total of 16% of this *sutta* is composed of material of this RS-1 category.

In those passages which were classified as Repetition of Structure Type-2, a basic structure is repeated, but with far less repetition of the wording, or in some cases, with modification to the structure of the wording which is replaced. Material of this category represents nearly 3% (2.5%) of this *sutta*.

In total almost 87% (86.8%)[70] of the *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta* involves quantifiable repetition of one kind or another at a primary level. This is surely a significantly high proportion of the text. It must also be noted that the verbatim end of the scale is particularly well represented.

Repetition is undoubtedly a mnemonic device. This is based on the simple observation that the more frequently a passage, unit of meaning or word is repeated the more likely it is to be remembered. Or as a verse in the *Dhammapada* states: "non-recitation is the rust of incantation".[71] The repetition encountered in Buddhist texts has frequently been taken to have a mnemonic function, but few have elaborated on their statements or investigated repetition in any systematic manner.[72]

I have so far argued that the first two stylistic features discussed in this paper could have functioned as aids to composition both within a tradition of composing material during the performance in an improvisatory manner and in a tradition of composing fixed texts which were to be transmitted verbatim. In addition to this, it was proposed that these features would also have had a mnemonic function within the latter tradition. In contrast to this, it is difficult to see the gross forms of repetition just discussed – the repetition of whole passages, with or without modification, and the repetition of structures with the replacement of various proportions of their wording – and the scale on which this is pursued, that is the proportion of the text involved, as anything other than proof, or at least as a very strong indication, that these texts were designed to be memorised and transmitted verbatim.[73] In contrast, material such as the contemporary Yugoslav epics studied by Lord (1960) or the contemporary Indian epics studied by Smith (1991), Beck (1982) and Roghair (1982), which is composed "during the performance", although exhibiting many forms of repetition, does not exhibit the form of gross repetition encountered in Pāli *sutta* texts.

The five categories of repetition established in the study upon which the above discussion of repetition in the *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta* is based can be graded according to the degree to which they each facilitate the learning and retention of this material. Verbatim Repetition obviously represents the greatest aid to memory. The greater the percentage of a text that is verbatim repetitive the easier it is to learn and remember. At a primary level, 30% of the *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta* consists of repeated passages of this classification.

The remaining four types of repetition each encompass a range of differences. In terms of the modifications to be made by the reciter, and hence the effort involved in making such changes, the Repetition with Minor Modifications and Repetition of Structure Type-1 categories on the one hand, and the Repetition with Important Modifications and Repetition of Structure Type-2 categories on the other, are seen to be parallel and to encompass a similar range of differences.

As mentioned, almost 35% of the *sutta* studied involves Repetition with Minor Modifications at a primary level. Another 16% involves Repetition of Structure Type-1. Together these two categories, which are similar in terms of their mnemonic significance, represent about 51% (50.5%) of this *sutta*.

The study also showed that almost 4% of this *sutta* involves Repetition with Important Modifications at a primary level and that approximately 3% involves Repetition of Structure Type-2. Together these two parallel categories represent about 6% (6.3%) of this *sutta*.

As 87% of the *Udumbarikasīhanādasutta* involves some form of quantifiable repetition on a primary level, 13% of this text is therefore only encountered once. Much of this consists of the opening and closing sections of the *sutta*. Although not occurring again, the passages and elements which make up this 13% commonly involve non-quantifiable forms of repetition (as do those which are repeated again) and may be found in other *suttas* of the *Dīghanikāya*.

Many of the passages which are repetitive at a primary level in the text are themselves composed of or incorporate quantifiable repetitive elements, which is repetition at a secondary level. For example, a passage which is repeated verbatim may itself be composed of a passage repeated verbatim twice. This secondary passage therefore occurs four times in the text. This secondary repetition would further increase the familiarity of the material being learnt and facilitate recitation.[74]

This study has focused on one *sutta* in the *Dīghanikāya*. But much of the material found in both the repetitive and non-repetitive passages of this *sutta* is also encountered elsewhere in the *Dīghanikāya*, which of course is significant if a body of *suttas* such as are contained in the present *Dīghanikāya* was learnt and transmitted by a particular group of monks or nuns. This repetition decreases the uniqueness of the material which is not repeated again within this *sutta*, and increases the familiarity of those passages which are.

Further, various forms of non-quantifiable repetition are an integral part of all passages, whether these passages are repeated again within this particular *sutta* or not, whether they are found in other *suttas* or are unique to this *sutta*, whether classified as being repetitive at a primary or secondary level. Passages are built up through the proliferation of similar word elements, units of meaning and structures. Many elements share sound and metrical similarities. Vocatives of address and particles such as *atha kho* and *kho* are continually used as markers throughout the *sutta*. Certain verbs are repeated in their non-finite forms to resume the following clause.[75] The wording used to express or depict a given concept, action or event is standardised, and diversity of vocabulary is avoided. And so on. In this way, although we have been able to quantify gross repetition of certain classifications, there are many forms of repetition employed by this class of Pāli text which cannot be quantified, yet which must also be considered to facilitate greatly the learning and recitation of this material. Repetition thus thoroughly permeates every dimension of this class of Buddhist literature.

The characteristics of the prose portions of Pāli canonical *sutta* texts discussed in this paper show that the authors of this material attempted to minimise differences and maximise similarities. They did this by using a

standardised diction (which we have referred to as formulas), by proliferating similar word elements often chosen for their sound and metrical similarities, and by pursuing repetition on a truly large scale, to mention but a few. Of these stylistic features, it is gross repetition which provides the greatest evidence that these texts were composed as fixed texts which were to be memorised and transmitted verbatim. As previously mentioned, these stylistic features do not prove that this literature was essentially an oral one, for written texts can utilise or mimic characteristics of an earlier oral tradition. Nor do they prove that these texts were conceived as fixed texts. But when combined with such historical factors as accounts of communal recitation, events which required a fixed text, then we are surely on firmer ground.

Although I have attempted to show that the early Buddhist *sutta* texts were, in the words of R. Gombrich, "deliberate compositions which were then committed to memory",[76] I would certainly agree that accounts of what the Buddha is supposed to have said and discourses on his teaching would have been given by the monks and nuns after the Buddha's death in an improvisatory manner, at times drawing heavily on memorised material, or as R. Gethin (1992) has argued, by using lists as a foundation. Such discourses may then have become the basis of later fixed texts. But these accounts and discourses were fundamentally different from the essentially fixed, memorised texts transmitted by the community, however imperfectly. Finally, the Parry-Lord model does not exhaust the oral or literary/performance dimension of oral cultures. In ancient, pre-literate India there was a strong tradition of composing fixed, religious texts which were designed to be memorised and transmitted verbatim.

Notes

1. O. von Hinüber, 1990, chap. V (esp. p. 22), p. 30, chap. XIV; K. R. Norman, 1993a, p. 280; R. Gombrich, 1990a & 1990b; L.S. Cousins, 1983, esp. p. 1; S. Collins, 1992.
2. R. Gombrich, 1990b, p. 27; O. von Hinüber, 1990, esp. p. 30.
3. S. Collins, 1992, esp. pp. 124–25; R. Gombrich, 1990b, p. 26.
4. T. W. Rhys Davids & H. Oldenberg, 1881, pp. XXXII–XXXV; cf. R. Gombrich, 1990b, pp. 27–8.
5. T. W. Rhys Davids & H. Oldenberg, 1881, pp. XXXII–XXXIII; R. Gombrich, 1990b, p. 28.
6. R. Gombrich, 1990b, p. 27. For the most recent views on writing in India, see O. von Hinüber, 1990, esp. pp. 54, 72 and K. R. Norman, 1993b, esp. pp. 243, 245–47.
7. See R. A. E. Coningham, 1993. S. U. Deraniyagala dates these finds to 600–500 BC; R. Allchin/R. A. E. Coningham tentatively date them to 400–450 BC.
8. O. von Hinüber, 1990, pp. 22–3; R. Gombrich, 1990a, pp. 7–8; 1990b, pp. 21–2; L. S. Cousins, 1983; G. von Simson, 1965; 1977, p. 479.
9. References to Pāli texts are to the Pāli Text Society's editions. Abbreviations of titles of works and of terms and signs follow the Epilegomena to Vol. I of the Critical Pāli Dictionary.
10. Vin I 196–7. Ud 59 reads *soḷasa aṭṭhakavaggikāni sabbān' eva sarena abhaṇi*; cf. S. Collins, 1992, p. 125.

11. Vin I 169.
12. D III 241f. cf. S. Collins, 1992, pp. 126–7.
13. Vin IV 14–5; cf. PED s.v. *pada* (*padaso*).
14. Vin II 236–41 = Ud 51–6.
15. E.g. *bahussuto hoti sutadharo sutasannicayo* (M I 356); *so ca bhikkhu bahussuto hoti āgatāgamo dhammadharo vinayadharo mātikādharo paṇḍito vyatto medhāvī lajjī kukkuccako sikkhākāmo* (Vin I 337). Cf. S. Collins, 1992 (for a brief description of the teaching and learning process, see esp. p. 124).
16. Cf. O. von Hinüber, 1990, pp. 26, 28.
17. O. von Hinüber, 1990, chap. VI; K. R. Norman, 1989, p. 29.
18. E. W. Adikaram (1946, chap 3) remains the standard reference for the *bhāṇaka* tradition. Cf. K. R. Norman, 1989, pp. 32–4; R. Gombrich, 1990a, p. 7; 1990b, pp. 25–6; S. Collins, 1992, pp. 124–5; L. S. Cousins, 1983, pp.4–5.
19. For examples of differences which may be due to the *bhāṇaka* tradition, see below. See also G. von Simson, 1977, p. 486; O. von Hinüber, 1990, chap. X; K. R. Norman, 1989, pp. 34, 50.
20. A. K. Warder (1980, p. 294) mentions Bu-ston's account which states that all schools committed their texts to writing in the 1st century CE or earlier. Warder (pp. 345–6) also refers to the Sarvāstivādin account which states that they wrote theirs down *c.* 100 CE.
21. *piṭakattayapāliñ ca tassā aṭṭhakathaṃ pi ca*
mukhapāṭhena ānesuṃ pubbe bhikkhū mahāmatī
hāniṃ disvāna sattānaṃ tadā bhikkhū samāgatā
ciraṭṭhitatthaṃ dhammassa potthakesu likhāpayuṃ (Dīp XX 20–1 = Mhv XXXIII 100–101).
Most scholars seem to uphold the validity of this account. Cf. H. Bechert, 1991, pp. 9–10; 1992, esp. p. 52; K. R. Norman, 1983, p. 5; 1989, p. 36–8; R. Gombrich, 1992, p. 160; L. S. Cousins, 1991, p. 55; S. Collins, 1990, p. 96ff. 1992, p. 128; T. W. Rhys Davids & H. Oldenberg, 1881, pp. xxxv–xxxvi.
22. J. Brough, 1962, pp. 28–9, 218–19. The Pāli version of the verse to which Brough refers has *va sayati*, where the other versions support an original *sa vayati*. Brough (ibid., p. 218) dismisses the possibility that such a transposition of syllables could have occurred in the course of purely oral transmission as, he states, "such a supposition would indeed imply an unbelievably slipshod *paramparā*. But in manuscript copying this is a common and readily understandable error." However, such a transposition seems equally possible in oral transmission. Cf. S. Collins, 1990, fnt. 25.
23. See K. R. Norman, 1993b.
24. R. Gombrich, 1990b, p. 21; cf. 1992, p. 160. T. W. Rhys Davids & H. Oldenberg, (1881, p. xxxvi) suggest "about three hundred years". I. B. Horner (1992, p. 186), speaking of the *Vinaya* rules, states that the "rules were formulated orally and transmitted orally for probably more than 200 years".
25. S. Collins, 1992, esp. p. 121; cf. O. von Hinüber, 1990, p. 9, chaps. XIV & XV.
26. G. Bonazzoli (1983, esp. p. 267) and H. Bakker (1989, pp. 330–32) both argue that, in the case of the *purāṇas*, stylistic features do not necessarily indicate oral composition. They both see the *purāṇas* as resulting from an interplay between oral and written transmission.
For examples of the criticism of the use of stylistic features or formulaic density as an indicator of oral or written origins which are encountered in the wider field of oral literature research, see for example, A. B. Lord, 1975, pp. 12–20; 1986, p. 478f; 1987; J. M. Foley, 1985, pp. 26–7, 42, 50, 56.
27. For a brief overview of Parry's work, see H. Lloyd-Jones (1992) and the introductory essay to J. M. Foley (1985).
28. Parry defined the formula as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea", a definition which has remained prominent in the discussion of oral literature. This has obvious limitations for our purposes for we are dealing with prose and the metrical dimension or requirement is therefore inappropriate. A number of scholars have argued for the exclusion of the metrical component from the definition of a formula. See, for example, P. Kiparsky, 1976, pp. 84, 87; M. O'Conner, 1980, pp. 104–106; G. H. Roghair, 1982, pp. 60–6; O. M. Davidson, 1988; cf. J. D. Smith, 1987, esp. pp. 596–7, 602.
29. In the introduction to his important and influential publication *The Singer of Tales* (1960, p. 4), Lord set out his definitions: "stated briefly, oral epic song is narrative poetry composed in a manner evolved over many generations by singers of tales who did not know how to write; it

consists of the building of metrical lines and half lines by means of formulas and formulaic expressions and of the building of songs by the use of themes. This is the technical sense in which I shall use the word 'oral' and 'oral epic' in this book."

30. A. B. Lord, 1960, p. 280.
31. I. M. L. Hunter, 1985. But lengthy verbatim recall could, in fact, be verified by a group of specialist reciters. As will be shown in the following studies, there are also many stylistic features which can aid the oral transmission of a fixed text.
32. See, for example, J. D. Smith, 1977. Lord's response to Smith's criticism is found in A. B. Lord, 1987, p. 65ff.
33. Although not thought to be a memorised text, the contemporary oral Indian epic of Pābūjī exhibits a high degree of stability, which J. D. Smith (1987, pp. 600–602; 1989, p. 33) attributes to the religious status of the hero. Thus a religio-philosophical dimension may result in an even greater degree of stability, or even fixity.
34. There is, in fact, much scope for such changes to occur within a "rigidly memorised tradition". This is discussed in greater detail in the conclusion to my Ph.D. thesis (see note below).
35. This article first appeared in 1988 in the *Journal of Pāli and Buddhist Studies*.
36. The only other work which has attempted to address the question of the method used by the early Buddhists for the composition of their texts is R. Gethin's "The *Mātikās*: memorization, mindfulness and the list" (1992). Gethin, like Cousins, considers the delivery of discourses and accounts of what the Buddha said to have been an improvisatory affair, and the differences between parallel versions of the same text as resulting from such a method. The various versions of the *Dasuttarasutta* (*/Daśottarasūtra*), for example, differ in their inclusion or omission of certain lists because they represent different performances of what is essentially the same list-giving discourse (*ibid.*, pp. 157–8).
Other publications which have discussed the orality of the early Buddhist tradition are: O. von Hinüber, *Der Beginn der Schrift und frühe Schriftlichkeit in Indien*, 1990 (especially Chap. V "Die Mündlichkeit der ältesten buddhistischen Texte" and Chap. XIV "Die mündliche Textweitergabe bei den Buddhisten") and *Untersuchungen zur Mündlichkeit früher mittelindischer Texte der Buddhisten*, 1994; S. Collins, "Notes on some oral aspects of Pali literature", 1992; and R. Gombrich, "Recovering the Buddha's message", 1990a.
37. The most important studies of the style of Buddhist or Brahmanical literature are H. Oldenberg, *Zur Geschichte der altindischen Prosa*, 1917, esp. pp. 39–52; G. von Simson, *Zur Diktion einiger Lehrtexte des buddhistischen Sanskritkanons*, 1965; J. Gonda, *Stylistic repetitions in the Veda*, 1959. Of less importance are S. Weeratunge, "Some significant stylistic traits of Buddhist Sanskrit prose", 1992 and P. Kwella, "Some remarks on the style of some Buddhist Sanskrit texts", 1978.
38. The thesis title is *Some stylistic features of the prose portions of Pāli canonical sutta texts and their mnemonic function.* It was submitted to the University of Cambridge in September 1994.
39. These studies were restricted to an analysis of prose, because, as stated, this is by far the most dominant medium used by the early Buddhists. It is also particularly interesting as most oral literature is verse. I chose to work with Pāli canonical *sutta* texts, not because they are the oldest, but because they represent the most complete and best preserved body of texts representative of the early phase of Buddhist literature.
40. This diversity of terminology in part reflects a general uncertainty as to what actually constitutes a "formula", "stock phrase", and so on, and whether, say, a "formula" is different from a "stock phrase" or "stock expression". A detailed discussion of the terminology and definitions is presented in my Ph.D. thesis.
41. The inclusion of the unit "then", *atha kho*, depends on the context.
42. E.g. D II 237 *atha kho bho Mahāgovindo brāhmaṇo yena Reṇu rājā ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā Reṇuṃ rājānaṃ etad avoca.*
43. E.g. D I 236 *atha kho VāseṭṭhaBhāradvājā māṇavā yena Bhagavā ten' upasaṃkamiṃsu, upasaṃkamitvā Bhagavatā saddhiṃ sammodiṃsu, sammodanīyaṃ kathaṃ sārāṇīyaṃ vītisāretvā ekamantaṃ nisīdiṃsu. ekamantaṃ nisinno kho Vāseṭṭho māṇavo Bhagavantaṃ etad avoca.*
44. E.g. D II 144 *āyasmā Ānando ... yena Bhagavā ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā Bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ kho āyasmantaṃ Ānandaṃ Bhagavā etad avoca.*
45. E.g. D I 178–9 *atha kho Bhagavā yena samayappavādako tindukācīro ekasālako Mallikāya ārāmo ten' upasaṃkami. ... atha kho Bhagavā yena Poṭṭhapādo paribbājako ten' upasaṃkami. atha kho Poṭṭhapādo*

paribbājako Bhagavantaṃ etad avoca: 'etu kho bhante Bhagavā, sāgataṃ bhante Bhagavato, cirassaṃ kho bhante Bhagavā imaṃ pariyāyam akāsi yadidaṃ idh' āgamanāya, nisīdatu bhante Bhagavā, idaṃ āsanaṃ paññattan' ti. nisīdi Bhagavā paññatte āsane. Poṭṭhapādo pi kho paribbājako aññataraṃ nīcaṃ āsanaṃ gahetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ kho Poṭṭhapādaṃ paribbājakaṃ Bhagavā etad avoca. Note that the ascetic addresses the Buddha as '*bhante*'.

46. E.g. D I 226–7 *atha kho Bhagavā pubbaṇhasamayaṃ nivāsetvā pattacīvaraṃ ādāya saddhiṃ bhikkhusaṃghena yena Sālavatikā ten' upasaṃkami. … atha kho Bhagavā yena Lohiccassa brāhmaṇassa nivesanaṃ ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā paññatte āsane nisīdi. atha kho Lohicco brāhmaṇo Buddhapamukhaṃ bhikkhusaṃghaṃ paṇītena khādaniyena bhojaniyena sahatthā santappesi sampavāresi. atha kho Lohicco brāhmaṇo Bhagavantaṃ bhuttāviṃ onītapattapāṇiṃ aññataraṃ nīcaṃ āsanaṃ gahetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ kho Lohiccaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ Bhagavā etad avoca.*
47. The situation is generally the same in other canonical texts, though the formulas used may differ (see below).
48. The examples not mentioned in this paper of complicated and particularly detailed approaches, and of those which do not quite conform to the norm, show that these structures were not blindly imposed upon the material. The authors of this material were fully capable of breaking with the norm where necessary. Meaning was still the ultimate determinant of diction.
49. Cf. B. J. Manné, 1992, p. 163.
50. See L. S. Cousins, 1983 and R. Gethin, 1992.
51. See R. Gombrich, 1990b.
52. Cf. J. Gonda, 1959, pp. 41–3.
53. Cf. G. von Simson, 1965, pp. 142–3; 1977, pp. 479–80.
    But as mnemonic means "aiding memory", it therefore not only includes "aiding the remembering of what is memorised", but also "aiding the remembering of non-memorised elements", for example, the course of events or the appropriate, or approximate, wording. We therefore find formulas and other elements of composition in an improvisatory setting being referred to as "mnemonic aids" (B. A. Rosenberg, 1987, pp. 82–3) and "mnemonic elements" (J. D. Smith, 1989, p. 40). It is used in this paper in the sense of "aiding the learning and recall of a memorised text" (A. B. Lord, 1987, p. 67, makes the distinction between remembering and memorising; cf. J. D. Smith, 1989, pp. 36–7).
    The stylistic features discussed in this paper may have had other functions besides aiding composition. However, space does not permit a discussion of these here.
54. D II 104; Ud 63; S V 260; A IV 310.
55. *atha kho Māro pāpimā acirapakkante āyasmante Ānande yena Bhagavā ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā ekamantaṃ aṭṭhāsi. ekamantaṃ ṭhito kho Māro pāpimā Bhagavantaṃ etad avoca* (D II 104).
56. *atha kho Māro pāpimā acirapakkante āyasmante Ānande yena Bhagavā ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā etad avoca* (S V 260).
57. *atha kho Māro pāpimā acirapakkante āyasmante Ānande Bhagavantaṃ etad avoca* (A IV 310).
58. E.g. S II 32–3 *atha kho āyasmā Sāriputto yena aññatitthiyānaṃ paribbājakānaṃ ārāmo ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā tehi aññatitthiyehi paribbājakehi saddhiṃ sammodi, sammodanīyaṃ kathaṃ sārāṇīyaṃ vītisāretvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi. ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ kho āyasmantaṃ Sāriputtaṃ te aññatitthiyā paribbājakā etad avocuṃ.*
59. E.g. Ud 82 & 89 read *atha kho Bhagavā pubbaṇhasamayaṃ nivāsetvā pattacīvaraṃ ādāya saddhiṃ bhikkhusaṃghena yena* [house of host] *ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā paññatte āsane nisīdi*, while M II 146, Sn p. 111, A IV 187 and Vin I 217–8 read *atha kho Bhagavā pubbaṇhasamayaṃ nivāsetvā pattacīvaraṃ ādāya yena* [house of host] *ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā paññatte āsane nisīdi saddhiṃ bhikkhusaṃghena.*
60. E.g. D II 97 reads *atha kho Ambapālī gaṇikā Buddhapamukhaṃ bhikkhusaṃghaṃ paṇītena khādaniyena bhojaniyena sahatthā santappesi sampavāresi. atha kho Ambapālī gaṇikā Bhagavantaṃ bhuttāviṃ onītapattapāṇiṃ aññataraṃ nīcaṃ āsanaṃ gahetvā ekamantaṃ nisīdi*, while its parallel at Vin I 233 reads *atha kho Ambapālī gaṇikā Buddhapamukhaṃ bhikkhusaṃghaṃ paṇītena khādaniyena bhojaniyena sahatthā santappetvā sampavāretvā Bhagavantaṃ bhuttāviṃ onītapattapāṇiṃ ekamantaṃ nisīdi.*
61. W. Caland, 1931, p. 59; cf. J. Gonda, 1959, p. 61.
62. D III 54 *saccaṃ bhante bhāsitā me esā vācā yathā-bālena yathā-mūḷhena yathā-akusalenā ti.*
63. D III 36–7 *seyyathīdaṃ rājakathaṃ corakathaṃ mahāmattakathaṃ senākathaṃ bhayakathaṃ yuddhakathaṃ annakathaṃ pānakathaṃ vatthakathaṃ sayanakathaṃ mālākathaṃ gandhakathaṃ ñātikathaṃ yānakathaṃ gāmakathaṃ nigamakathaṃ nagarakathaṃ janapadakathaṃ itthikathaṃ [purisakathaṃ] sūrakathaṃ visikhākathaṃ kumbaṭṭhānakathaṃ pubbapetakathaṃ nānattakathaṃ lokakkhāyikaṃ [kathaṃ] samuddakkhāyikaṃ [kathaṃ] itibhavābhavakathaṃ iti vā.*

Most other occurrences of this formula omit *purisakatham*. All occurrences read *lokakkhāyikaṃ samuddakkhāyikaṃ itibhavābhavakathaṃ*. Cf. D I 7–8, 66, 178–9; III 54; M I 513; II 1, 23, 30; S V 419ff; A V 128–9; Vin I 188; IV 164.

64. The identification of specific classes of sound similarities, such as alliteration, assonance, homoioteleuton, etc., are not important here, for, as noted by J. Gonda (1959, pp. 376–7), such distinctions were probably not made. What mattered was the repetition and similarity of sounds.
65. See W. Caland, 1931; J. Gonda, 1959, e.g. pp. 60–4, 125f. G. von Simson, 1965, e.g. §§ 2.3, 2.7, 8.4–6; H. Smith, Epilegomena to the Critical Pāli Dictionary, p. 35* wax. comp.; O. von Hinüber, 1990, chap. VII; 1993, pp. 104–113. O. von Hinüber (1994) is the most detailed study so far published. Unfortunately, it arrived on my desk after my own studies were completed and the current paper was delivered.
66. The complete text is 34% larger than the abbreviated PTS version.
67. For example, the passage *puna ca paraṃ Nigrodha tapassī tapaṃ samādiyati, bhojanesu vodāsaṃ āpajjati "idaṃ me khamati, idaṃ me na-kkhamatī" ti. so yaṃ hi kho 'ssa na-kkhamati taṃ sāpekho pajahati, yaṃ pan' assa khamati taṃ gathito mucchito ajjhāpanno anādīnavadassāvī anissaraṇapañño paribhuñjati* (D III 43) is later repeated as *puna ca paraṃ Nigrodha tapassī tapaṃ samādiyati, bhojanesu na vodāsaṃ āpajjati "idaṃ me khamati, idaṃ me na-kkhamatī" ti. so yaṃ hi kho 'ssa na-kkhamati taṃ anapekho pajahati, yaṃ pan' assa khamati taṃ agathito amucchito anajjhāpanno ādīnavadassāvī nissaraṇapañño paribhuñjati* (D III 46).
68. E.g. D III 49–50.
69. *'tassa te Nigrodha viññussa sato mahallakassa na etad ahosi: "buddho so Bhagavā bodhāya dhammaṃ deseti, danto so Bhagavā damathāya dhammaṃ deseti, santo so Bhagavā samathāya dhammaṃ deseti, tiṇṇo so Bhagavā taraṇāya dhammaṃ deseti, parinibbuto so Bhagavā parinibbānāya dhammaṃ desetī" ' ti* (D III 54–5).
70. The complete *sutta* has a word count of 5,871. The word count for the passages which have been classed as VR is 1,761. The word counts for the other four categories are: RMM 2,028; RIM 222; RS-1 937; RS-2 149. The five categories have a total word count of 5,097, which represents 86.8% of the text.
71. Dhp 241 *asajjhāyamalā mantā* (Nārada Thera's translation).
72. G. von Simson (1965, esp. p. 142ff.) is the exception. Cf. T .W. Rhys Davids, 1881, pp. XXII–XXIII; R. Gombrich, 1990b, p. 24; W. B. Bollée, 1970, p. 172; L. S. Cousins, 1983, p. 9; G. von Simson, 1977, p. 480; A. Syrkin, 1983, p. 160; J. Gonda, 1959, pp. 78, 351.
73. Cf. T. W. Rhys Davids, 1881, p. XXII; R. Gombrich, 1990a, p. 7; 1990b, p. 24.
74. For example, of the passages which are VR at a primary level, 78.9% consists of quantifiable repetition of one kind or another. In total 53.4% of the material which is repetitive on a primary level involves quantifiable repetition on a secondary level.
75. In the above discussion of approach-formulas, for example, *upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamitvā* ("… he approached. Having approached") and *ekamantaṃ nisīdi, ekamantaṃ nisinno* ("… he sat down to one side. Seated to one side") were encountered.
76. R. Gombrich, 1990b, p. 24.

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Still Suffering After All These Aeons: the Continuing Effects of the Buddha's Bad Karma

Sally Mellick Cutler

When we consider the nature of Gotama, the man who is said to have achieved the status of an Awakened One or Buddha, we generally think of him as a spiritually supreme individual whose experience of enlightenment (*bodhi*, lit. 'awakening') places him apart from all other men. The biographical details concerning Gotama Buddha preserved in the canonical texts of the Theravādin school of Buddhism, the Pāli *Tipiṭaka*, generally reveal a life of triumph and perfection. There is no coherent, connected biography of the Buddha in what are regarded as the earliest Buddhist texts, but references to him in those texts reveal a man whose achievement of Buddhahood implied that he could no longer be compared with any other human, or indeed divine, being. The conception of the Buddha as a kind of 'super-man', which was greatly developed in the centuries after the Buddha's death by schools such as the Mahā-sāṅghika-Lokottaravādins[1], is expressed in unambiguous terms in a number of the *suttas*, 'discourses', of the Pāli Canon. In the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the brahmin Soṇadaṇḍa says of the Buddha: "the ascetic Gotama's fame is based on his achievement of unsurpassed wisdom and conduct".[2] In the *Gopakamoggallāna Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the elder monk Ānanda says:

> There is no one monk entirely and completely endowed with those qualities with which the Lord, the *arahat*, the all-enlightened was endowed. For the Lord was the producer of the unproduced Path, the preacher of the Path that had not been originated, the knower, cognizer, perceiver of the Path.[3]

The special feature which originally set the Buddha apart was his realisation of the Dhamma, the true nature of existence, which was the core of his teaching; this understanding led to his release from *saṃsāra*, the

cycle of existence, and his attainment of *nirvāṇa*, the state in which the basis for continuing existence has been extinguished. However, many other special features quickly accrued to him as his renown as a teacher spread, and emphasis began to be placed on extraordinary aspects of his nature, and on his separateness from the mass of unawakened beings to whom he preached. The *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* is a comparatively late discourse, revealing the development of doctrinal beliefs concerning the nature of a Buddha, and referred to by K. R. Norman as 'an elaborate piece of Buddhology'.[4] It describes thirty-two special physical attributes which were said to be the marks of a great man, indicating a being destined to be either a universal emperor (*cakkavattin*) or a Buddha. These bodily marks, which were attributed to Gotama and said to be the result of his virtuous actions in former lives, included having wheels on the soles of his feet, a golden complexion, a tuft of hair between his eyes and 'net-like' hands and feet. In later texts, such as the Pāli commentary on the *Vimānavatthu* and the Sanskrit *Lālita Vistara*, a further list of eighty marks was added, including physical characteristics such as copper coloured nails and hidden sinews. In a eulogistic description of the Buddha in the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*, the following is included:

> The ascetic Gotama is well-born on both sides ... he is handsome, good-looking, pleasing, of the most beautiful complexion, in form and countenance like Brahmā, of no mean appearance ... He bears the thirty-two marks of a Great Man. He is welcoming, kindly of speech, courteous, genial, clear and ready of speech. He is attended by four assemblies, revered, honoured, esteemed and worshipped by them.[5]

In a thirteenth century Sinhalese work, the *Pūjāvaliya*, it is said:

> She [Yasodharā] saw the Lord Buddha, who was ever radiant, like the disc of the rising sun, because of the thirty-two principal marks and the eighty subordinate marks of a Great One.[6]

The possession by Gotama Buddha of such marks is regarded as the physical indication of his transcendental nature:

> An ancient Indian idea that a great man has thirty-two special physical features was also applied to the idealized image of Buddha; here they are symbols of qualities attained by cultivation of good practices.[7]

This is explained in canonical and commentarial works such as the *Cariyāpiṭaka* and the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* as being the result of his previous good karma. These texts describe how, during a vast number of previous lives, the *bodhisatta*, the Future Buddha, had performed skilful, meritorious actions in order to fulfill the perfections essential to the aim on which he was resolved, and reveal that those actions had produced results beneficial to his attainment of Buddhahood. At the beginning of the *Śibi Jātaka*, the

second story in the (possibly fourth century) Sanskrit *Jātakamāla*, it is said:

> According to tradition, when the Lord was still a *bodhisattva* he was at one time king of the Śibis. This was because his store of good deeds had, by dint of constant accumulation over an immense period of time, become part of him.[8]

There is in existence a large body of *jātaka* stories in which good deeds performed by the Buddha during previous births in animal, human and divine forms are described in order to explain incidents in his final life. Such stories, over five hundred of which comprise the Pāli collection referred to above, provide an extended karmic biography for the Buddha, and underline a view of the universe as being characterised by karmic interconnection and progression. Many of the texts of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, the division of the Pāli Canon which contains some of the latest works to be accepted as canonical by the Theravādins, are concerned with explaining the working of karma. These texts typically describe the benefits resulting from the performance of skilful and meritorious actions, the past career of the Buddha providing the supreme exemplar. The *Vimānavatthu* is one such text; it describes the comfortable circumstances enjoyed by a variety of deities and explains them as the result of meritorious actions performed by the celestial beings during former human births. The complementary text, the *Petavatthu*, on the other hand, provides karmic reasons for the suffering being undergone by fifty-one departed ones, *petas*.[9] Another such text is the *apadāna*,[10] a collection of karmic stories in verse, the majority of which deal with the past lives of Buddhist elder monks and nuns who were the direct disciples of Gotama Buddha and who arrived at *arahat*-ship (liberation) after hearing his instruction. The poems of the *Thera-* and *Therī-apadāna* sections of the collection explain the positions and attainments of the monks and nuns as being the result of resolves made and actions performed by them in their former lives. While the past actions are generally good, some of the poems in the *Therāpadāna* also explain certain undesirable aspects of the final births of the elder monks as being the result of former bad actions performed by them.

While most of the references to the Buddha in the Pāli Canon reinforce the image of him as an extraordinary man, there are a few stories which deal with unpleasant events in his life and enable us to consider him in human, rather than super-human, terms. Of the episodes in the canonical literature in which the Buddha is said to have been afflicted with physical suffering, the best-known is that contained in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* which describes the sickness which affected Gotama after eating a meal provided by the smith Cunda. This is actually the second reference in this *sutta* to the Buddha's being struck by illness, but it is the one which is most often referred to as it was closely followed by the Buddha's death:

> And after having eaten the meal provided by [the smith] Cunda, the Lord was attacked by a severe sickness with bloody diarrhoea and with sharp pains as if he were about to die.[11]

Further examples of canonical references to the Buddha being physically afflicted include two occasions on which he is reported to be suffering from back-ache[12] and consequently unable to preach. We can also include in this category the physical effects of the severe austerities performed by the *bodhisatta* prior to his realisation of the efficacy of the middle path between austerity and excess; these are referred to in several places in the Pāli Canon, and are depicted in Buddhist art. There are also several references in canonical literature to occasions on which the Buddha suffered from verbal or physical attack from people jealous of his reputation as a teacher and of the popularity of his teachings. These include the three attempts made by the monk Devadatta to kill the Buddha or to have him killed, which are recorded in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*,[13] and that made by non-Buddhist ascetics in order to have the Buddha and a group of his monks blamed for the murder of the woman Sundarī, which is recorded in the *Udāna*.[14]

These separate incidents are collected together with several others, and explained as the remaining karmic result of former bad deeds performed by the Buddha, in one of the poems contained in the *Apadāna* collection. As noted above, most of the poems in the Pāli *Apadāna* reveal the achievements of the great elder monks and nuns closely associated with Gotama Buddha to be the fruit of actions of piety and faith performed by them in former births. Although the Pāli term *apadāna*, like its Sanskrit equivalent *avadāna*, has often been translated as 'noble or glorious deed, heroic exploit', a number of the poems in the *Apadāna* collection reveal this translation to be inaccurate. *Apadānas* such as those attributed to the elder monks Mahāmoggallāna and Upāli contain stories about good and bad deeds performed in previous lives, and describe how both types of action continue to bear fruit in the final lives of the protagonists. In the *Upālittherāpadāna*, the elder monk Upāli relates two stories of the past. The first past story describes his performance of an act of generosity towards the former Buddha Padumuttara, and his voicing of an aspiration for the future in the presence of that Buddha; these have as their ultimate reward the attainment of a place in Gotama Buddha's monastic order (*saṅgha*), and liberation from the cycle of existence. The second past story, however, concerns his harassment of a Buddha, as a result of which he was born as a lowly barber in his final existence, although this was not a barrier to his attaining an exalted monastic position and ultimate release. Upāli says to the Buddha: "Because of that [evil] action, O Constant One, I was born into a low rank. Transcending that [inferior] birth, I have entered the safe citadel [*nirvāṇa*]."[15] The version of the *Mahāmoggallānattherāpadāna* preserved

in the canonical collection is much shorter and less developed than that of the elder monk Upāli, despite dealing with one of the most celebrated disciples of Gotama Buddha. The elder monk Mahāmoggallāna also initially relates a story of the past in which he describes his honouring of a former Buddha with musical entertainment and a meal. After he has eaten, the Buddha prophesies that eventually, "after falling from one of the hells",[16] the donor will be born as a brahmin, become the second of the chief disciples of the Gotama Buddha, and attain *nirvāṇa*, "instigated by the basis of good karma".[17] This reference to a future birth in one of the hells is apparently connected with the brief admission by the elder monk, later in his *apadāna*, that in another former life he had killed both his parents. He states that, as a result of this, he has always died from an act of violence and will do so even in his final existence.[18] This *apadāna*, therefore, reveals that the karmic traces of a former evil action are not cancelled even by an accumulation of meritorious actions, and demonstrates how they may remain effective and bear fruit even after liberation has been achieved.

In the commentary on the verses attributed to the elder monk Mahāmoggallāna in the Pāli *Theragāthā* collection, the term *kammapilotikā* is used to describe the remaining effects of the former bad action and to explain why the elder monk, despite his attainments, was killed in an attack by assassins.[19] The Pāli word *piloti(kā)* is defined as 'a thread, small piece of cloth or rag' and is generally used in the compound *paṭapiloti(kā)*, 'garment of rags, rag cloak or robe'.[20] *Kammapiloti(kā)*, therefore, may be rendered in English as 'strand or remnant of *karma*, karmic remainder'.[21] This term is only ever used in Pāli in the context of bad actions and their results and is not found in either the *apadāna* or its commentary in connection with the elder monk Mahāmoggallāna. It is, however, used in both texts in connection with the Buddha himself. The *apadāna* in which unpleasant episodes in the final life of Gotama are explained as the remaining result of bad deeds performed by him in the past is called the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna of the Buddha (pubbakammapiloti nāma buddhāpadānaṃ)*. In two Thai versions of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* there is an apparent attempt by a late editor to make sense of the words *pilotikassa kammassa* which occur in the third verse of the poem, that in which the Buddha explains what he is about to relate. The Thai editor adds the lines: "Seeing a forest-dwelling monk, I gave him a rag robe (*pilotika*). I then made my first resolve for buddhahood", which creates the following ending for the verse: "[The fruit] of my rag robe [-giving] action ripens even while I am Buddha." Without the interpolated segment, the verse reads: "Listen to me O monks. [Hear about] the action done by me [and how the fruit] of the remainder of that action ripens even while I am a Buddha." The reference to a good action at the beginning of this *apadāna* is, however, misleading and inappropriate; all other versions of this text introduce it as a description by the Buddha of his own past bad actions as a means of providing karmic

explanations for unpleasant events which affected him in his final life. In the commentary on the *Udāna*, it is stated that the remaining fruits of former actions which caused pain and other kinds of unpleasantness to the Buddha are also known as *kammāni pilotikāni*.[22]

Although the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* is attributed to the Buddha, it is not included in the *Buddhāpadāna* section of the collection which in its current form contains only a single eponymous poem describing an otherwise unknown story from a past life of the Buddha. The *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* is actually contained within the *Therāpadāna* section,[23] a placement which reflects the problematic nature of the text. It is, however, comprehensively discussed in the exegesis on the last verse of the *Buddhāpadāna* in the commentary on the first three sections of the *apadāna*, the *Visuddhajanavilāsinī*.[24] The first two verses of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* are, however, discussed in the appropriate part of the commentary on the *Therāpadāna*, indicating that this poem had been placed in its problematic position by the time the *Visuddhajanavilāsinī* was composed. The commentary does not give any explanation for the placement of this *apadāna* of the Buddha in a section devoted to karmic biographies of elder monks. It is possible that it reflects a deliberate attempt by an early redactor to obscure the connection of this particular poem with the Buddha because of its problematic doctrinal implications. This solution is not, however, entirely satisfactory, as the structure of the *apadāna* collection is such that the complete removal of the poem, rather than its relocation, would have been possible as well as doctrinally justifiable. In its commentary on the *Therāpadāna*, the *Visuddhajanavilāsinī* provides glosses on 561 *apadānas* (the last two of which are duplicates of poems included earlier in the collection). However, currently available versions of the *Therāpadāna* generally contain a total of 550 *apadānas*, in an apparent attempt to emphasise the connection between that collection and the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*. It seems likely that the nine additional poems were deliberately removed from the collection by a redactor who wished to emphasise the correspondence between the *apadāna* stories of the great elder monks and the *jātaka* stories of the Buddha.[25] If this is so, it implies that the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* could have been just as easily excised by a redactor who did not accept the position that the Buddha's sufferings were the result of his own bad karma. That it was not is one of several interesting questions raised by the presence of this poem in the *apadāna* collection.

A version of this poem may have existed before the first sectarian splits in the Buddhist monastic order, as *avadānas* corresponding to the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* are preserved in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese,[26] and it is possible that a solution to the problem of the poem's placement in the Pāli collection may be found through a comparative study of these texts.[27] The structure of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* does not conform to that of the standard *apadāna* and, like its subject matter, places it apart from

the other poems in the *Therāpadāna* section of the Pāli collection. In twenty-seven verses it provides succint descriptions of twelve past misdeeds and their results, thereby drawing clear causal connections between the past and the present within a narrative framework which differs significantly, not only from that of even the shortest of the other *apadānas* in the *Therāpadāna*, but also from that of the *Buddhāpadāna* with which it could be expected to correspond. The *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* is introduced by two verses which locate the Buddha amongst a group of monks (the number is not specified) gathered near Lake Anotatta, which is said to have been a favourite resting place of the Buddha and a popular place for assemblies.[28] Such introductory verses are not part of the standard *apadāna* pattern and they are not found in any other poem in the *Therāpadāna*, although they are found in the *Buddhāpadāna* and the *Paccekabuddhāpadāna*.[29] The significance of the possession of this feature by such a limited number of poems in the Pāli collection can only be properly evaluated by studying them in a wider Buddhist context and by comparing them with corresponding texts in the Theravādin and other Buddhist traditions.

Although the current form of this poem describes twelve former misdeeds of the Buddha, it should be noted that the version of this *apadāna* preserved in two manuscripts from Thailand and in the most recent Thai printed edition of the *apadāna* contain verses describing a thirteenth example of former misconduct and its fruit. While there is no reference to this episode in the *Visuddhajanavilāsinī*, it appears to suggest that an enlarged version of the Pāli text once existed and circulated as an independent text, presumably postdating the composition of the commentary and possibly confined to mainland South East Asia. It does seem that, despite its apparent concealment deep within the *Therāpadāna*, the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* continued to be developed and discussed as an individual poem, separate from its canonical context. This process may have occurred alongside the general discussions in Pāli commentarial and post-canonical literature about whether Buddhas were, like all other beings, subject to the effects of previous bad karma, or whether they were karmically free. The concentration on 'problem action' (*pañhakamma*) and its results in the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* not only conflicts with any view of the *apadāna* genre being one comprising only stories of glorious and noble deeds, but also distances it from all the other poems in the *Therāpadāna*. As we have seen, the other poems containing descriptions of bad action and its result place them alongside descriptions of good action and its results. This may indicate that an *apadāna* of the Buddha dealing with good karma was originally linked with the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* so that a complete karmic biography was revealed through the contrasting texts. The *Buddhāpadāna* which comprises the first section of the Pāli collection does not, however, appear to fit the requirements for such a text in either form or content. In this context, a comparative study of this *apadāna* and the

Cariyāpiṭaka, which is largely based on the *Jātaka* collection and which calls itself an *apadāna* of the Buddha (*buddhāpadāniya*), could be productive. As Jonathan Walters says: "the stories about bad karma and bad effects are part of the same story which tells of good karma and good effects".[30]

In the *Visuddhajanavilāsinī*, the commentator has not followed the order of the verses as they occur in the *apadāna*. The verses have been discussed in an order chosen to present the past actions according to the chronology of the Buddha's final life and to reflect the 'historical' order of the unpleasant events which they explain. The order of events in the poem itself, however, appears to be based on a classification of those events which are experienced as a result of the former actions into three general categories: slander from enemies, assaults by Devadatta, and physical illness or deprivation.[31] In the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* the Buddha begins his explanation of his former actions by saying:

> Listen to me, O monks. [Hear about] the action done by me [and how the fruit] of the remnants of [that] action ripens even while [I am] a Buddha.[32]

The story which comes first in the Thai version of this *apadāna* deals with an occasion on which, as a cowherd, the *bodhisatta* prevented a cow from drinking water. He says: "As the fruit of that action (*tena kammavipākena*), here in my final birth I am not able to drink as I wish when I am thirsty." This is apparently a reference to the Buddha's request, reported in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, that Ānanda bring him water from a muddy stream after he has fallen ill,[33] a request with which Ānanda is unwilling to comply. In the first story in the majority of extant versions of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna*, the Buddha states that he was once a scoundrel named Munāli who slandered a *paccekabuddha*. The next two verses read:

> As the fruit of that action, I transmigrated in hell for a very long time, experiencing sensory suffering for many thousands of years. As the remaining effect of that action (*tena kammāvasesena*), here in my final birth I was slanderously accused over Sundarī.[34]

The story of Sundarī is found in both canonical and commentarial sources; it describes how a woman was persuaded by a group of ascetics hostile to the Buddha to damage his reputation by claiming that she spent her nights with him in his perfumed hut. She was then murdered and responsibility for her death was falsely attributed to him.[35] The next episode in the *apadāna* also deals with slander, and it is apparent that the Buddha's concern with the outward appearance and public conduct of the monks in his *saṅgha*, frequently expressed in both *vinaya* and *sutta* texts, is based on an awareness of the strength of public concern about the morality of wandering ascetic teachers and their followers. The Buddha continues his catalogue of past misdeeds by stating that, in a former birth, he slandered a follower of a buddha named Sabbābhibhū who is not otherwise known in

the Pāli tradition. He says: "For that slanderous accusation, I transmigrated in a hell for a very long time",[36] and reveals that the remaining fruit of his action was that he was the object of much false accusation when he achieved birth as a human. The culmination of this was the claim by the non-Buddhist ascetic woman Ciñcamāṇavikā that she had spent a night with Gotama and had become pregnant by him. Ciñcamāṇavikā is also linked with attempts to harm the Buddha in a number of *jātaka* stories, and there appears to have been some conflation of the episodes concerning these two women[37] in the Buddhist literary tradition. In the third story in the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna*, the fruit of the action is not linked directly with the Buddha and it is also used, like the first story, to provide a karmic background to the Sundarī story. In this episode, the Buddha relates how he once falsely described a powerful seer as a sensualist to his students. The students then spread the lie from household to household as they went on their alms rounds, as a result of which they were all included in the accusations over the death of Sundarī.[38]

The next group of stories is related in order to provide karmic explanations for the assassination attempts instigated by the Buddha's jealous cousin, Devadatta; these are collected together in the *Cullavagga* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, where the great power of the Buddha rather than the unpleasantness of the events is emphasised. The first of the three stories in this category tells how, in a former birth, the Buddha killed his half-brother for his inheritance by throwing him over a cliff:

> Formerly [in another birth], greedy for wealth, I killed my own half-brother by throwing him off a mountain path and crushing him with a rock.[39]

As a result of that action, Devadatta attempted to kill the Buddha by throwing a huge rock at him. However, only a splinter of rock actually struck the Buddha, piercing his toe and making it bleed. The next story describes how, as a child in a former life, the Buddha threw a piece of pottery (presumably intentionally) at a passing *paccekabuddha*. He says: "As the fruit of that action, here in my final birth Devadatta hired thugs to kill me."[40] This is the only story among those in the first two groups in which the result does not seem to parallel the former bad action. Interestingly, the corresponding verse quoted here in the *apadāna* commentary gives a completely different, and more appropriate, result for this action. It says: "As the fruit of that action, the discontented Devadatta threw a stone at me after I had become a Buddha."[41] The third story in this group explains an event which was very popular in canonical and post-canonical Buddhist literature and in Buddhist art, namely the attack on the Buddha by the elephant Nālāgiri. The Buddha describes how, in a former birth, he was an elephant-trainer who caused his elephant to attack a *paccekabuddha* who was going on an alms-round. He says:

> As the result of that action, the fierce elephant Nālāgiri was let loose and charged me in the excellent town of Giribajja.[42]

Although it is not explicitly stated in the *apadāna*, this attack is generally said to have been instigated by Devadatta.

The final group of stories in the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* provides a series of karmic explanations for a variety of physical discomforts said to have afflicted the Buddha. In the *apadāna*, the result of the final unskilful action which is described affects Gotama prior to his attainment of enlightenment leading to its being the first to be commented on in the *Visuddhajanavilāsinī*. The first of this group of six stories deals with a former time in which the Buddha was a king and, in a fight, killed a man with a sword. He says:

> As the result of that action, I was greatly tormented in a hell. As the remaining effect of that action, now the skin on my foot is completely ulcerated, for the effect of action never perishes [without result].[43]

The commentary on this verse relates this affliction to the incident in which Devadatta threw a rock at the Buddha, and states that an infection or abscess developed from the splinter wound on the Buddha's toe. The next story is most unusual, and it is the only one to refer to an unskilful action of thought rather than of word or deed. It is also very well attested, being found in every version of the text, although the result is not identical in each instance. The Pāli version reads: "[In another former birth] I was a fisherman's son living in a village of fishermen. Seeing fish killed made me happy."[44] The result of this pleasure in the suffering of other beings is said to have been that he was afflicted with headaches in his final life. In this story, a more unpleasant karmic reward is said to have resulted for the fishermen who actually killed the fish: they were born as Śākyans and were all slaughtered by Viḍūḍabha, the king of Kosala, whose father was a contemporary of the Buddha.[45] The next story deals with a former birth in which the *bodhisatta* insulted the followers of the former Buddha Phussa, telling them to eat barley, an inferior grain, rather than rice, and thereby implying that they were not worthy of superior food.[46] This resulted in the Buddha being forced himself to eat barley throughout the three months Rains Retreat which he spent in Verañja during a time of famine; an account of this episode is contained in the opening section of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The next story relates to a birth in which, as a wrestler, the Buddha caused the death of another wrestler during a competition. Because of this action, in his final life he was afflicted by the back pain which was referred to above.[47] The penultimate story describes how, as a doctor in a former birth, he unnecessarily administered a purge to a rich patient, as a result of which he suffered from diarrhoea at the end of his life.[48] The final story in the Pāli *apadāna* describes how in a former life, as the youth Jotipāla, he

insulted the Buddha Kassapa by saying: "How then could enlightenment come to a baldy? Enlightenment is very difficult to obtain."[49] As a result of this, the *bodhisatta* had to spend six years practising severe austerities at Uruvela before realising that he was searching for the truth on the wrong path. Gotama was only able to attain enlightenment and reach his goal after this lengthy period of striving, which was far greater then that undergone by any of the former Buddhas whose biographies are set out in the *Buddhavaṃsa*.

The most accessible of the non-Pāli versions of this text is that preserved in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* division of the Mūlasarvāstivādin *Vinaya*, in the section which is usually referred to as the *Anavataptagāthā*,[50] and which is now available in a French translation.[51] This translation is based on Tibetan and Chinese sources, supplemented by Sanskrit fragments from Gilgit. In the *Anavataptagāthā*, a prose description of eleven examples of former unskilful actions performed by the Buddha precedes a versified account in which both the order of events and their number differ from those of the prose text.[52] There is also a Sanskrit version of this text preserved in the *Daśakarmaplutyavadāna* section of the 11th century *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* (*Avadāna-kalpalatā*) which corresponds to the verses of the *Anavataptagāthā* in form and in the number of events which it describes.

We have seen that the standard version of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* contains descriptions of twelve episodes from former lives of the Buddha, two of which apparently relate to a single result, although they are treated separately in both the text and the commentary. The results can be summarised as follows: two apparent episodes of slander by Sundarī and one of slander by Ciñcamāṇavikā; three attacks carried out or instigated by Devadatta, although only one of them actually causes injury to the Buddha; four instances of physical illness: an infected foot, headaches, backache and diarrhoea; and two instances of physical discomfort: being fed on inferior food for three months and undergoing austerities for six years. The verse section of the *Anavataptagāthā* and the *Avadānakalpalatā* both contain descriptions of ten former unskilful actions and their fruit. All ten of the stories related in the *Anavataptagāthā* are also found in the Pāli *apadāna* text, although they do not completely agree in three particular instances, and the order of events is not identical in the two texts. Only one of the episodes related to Devadatta's attempts to destroy the Buddha is described in the *Anavataptagāthā*, namely that concerning the *bodhisatta*'s murder of his half-brother which resulted in the only successful physical attack by Devadatta on the Buddha. The most significant difference is found in the Mūlasarvāstivādin story used to explain the injury to the Buddha's foot which the Pāli text states to be the result of one nobleman killing another man in a fight. In the *Anavataptagāthā* account, the Buddha describes how, in a former life as a merchant, he killed a fellow merchant on his ship with a sword; he explains that the remaining result (*karmāvaśesena*) of this was that

his foot was pierced by a splinter of wood. Differences between the two versions of the remaining stories are slight, as can be seen in the following examples. In the *Anavataptagāthā* account of the second of the former actions connected with the Buddha being falsely accused by Sundarī, it is actually stated that the fruit of that action was suffered by the Buddha as well as by those who were his pupils at the time. Again, in the *Anavataptagāthā* version of the unusual story connected to the Buddha's previous birth as a fisherman's son, the headache said to have been suffered by the Buddha as a result of his evil action is specifically linked to the occasion on which his former companions were killed by Viḍūḍabha. In the Mūlasarvāstivādin version of these episodes, the descriptions of the former actions and their results appear to have been constructed more logically and therefore express the karmic conections more clearly than those in the Pāli *apadāna*.

In the *Anavataptagāthā*, the Buddha is said to have described his former actions and their continuing effects in response to the questions of a group of 500 monks who had accompanied him to Lake Anavatapta, the Sanskrit equivalent of Anotatta. According to the Mūlasarvāstivādins, this was one of the ten acts which must be performed by a Buddha before he can attain *nirvāṇa*.[53] The Buddha introduces his description by requesting the assembled monks to listen to an account of the evil action (*pāpakarman*) performed by him in the past.[54] The major part of the *Anavataptagāthā* is comprised of the stories of 36 of those monks, in which they reveal "the fabric of their *karma*"[55] through the recitation of episodes from former lives and the results of the actions performed during them. Hofinger uses a variety of translations including the one above for the Tibetan term *las kyi rgyu ba*, which he equates to the Sanskrit term *karmaploti*,[56] in which *ploti*, 'thread, cord', is used in the sense of 'connection, interweaving'.[57] However, a more detailed study of this term would be helpful, as Tibetan translations of other similar texts use the slightly different term, *las kyi rgyud*, which is actually equivalent to Sanskrit *karmasaṃtāna* or *karmasaṃtati*, 'continuity of karma'. As Paul Harrison points out in his discussion of one such text:

> 'Continuity of karma,' Tib. *las kyi rgyud*, stands here doubtless for Skt. *karma-ploti* or *karma-pluti*.[58]

It is apparent from the *Anavataptagāthā* that this term was used in Sanskrit in the context of both good and bad actions although, as we have noted above, the Pāli term *kammapiloti* is only ever used to refer to bad actions producing unpleasant results.

The section of the *Anavataptagāthā* concerned with the karmic history of selected elder monks is followed by a verse eulogy of the Buddha, after which are placed the prose and verse accounts of the Buddha's bad karma. It is possible that it is this arrangement which is reflected in the apparently anomalous placement of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* in the Pāli collection. Further support for this suggestion may be drawn from the fact that the

apadāna immediately preceding the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna*, the *Soṇakoṭivīsattherāpadāna*, is almost identical with the poem attributed to Koṭiviṃsa in the *Anavataptagāthā*, and ends with the words:

> The elder monk Soṇa Koṭivīsa, at the head of the company of monks, answered the question [on karma] asked at the great lake Anotatta.[59]

If there was originally some connection between the *Anavatptagāthā* and the *apadāna*, it is possible that the number of stories attributed to elder monks in the Pāli text originally may have been 500, corresponding to the group of 500 monks at Lake Anotatta, rather than 550 corresponding to the number of *jātaka* stories associated with the Buddha. This could also suggest that the earliest version of the *Therāpadāna* may have contained a general introduction which was lost early in the text's transmission, or that each *apadāna* attributed to an elder monk had its own introductory verses corresponding to those in the *Buddhāpadāna* and the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* and to the brief introductory statements in the prose stories of the *Anavataptagāthā*.

In the *Avadānakalpalatā* version of this text, the Buddha relates the stories of his former bad actions to a group of monks, in an unspecified setting, during an account of the former lives of his two chief disciples in order to illustrate the maxim that "every creature must suffer from the effects of his works".[60] Here again we have a connection between the past stories of elder monks and those of the Buddha himself. In the *Avadānakalpalatā* account, the term *karmapluti* is used and is taken, I am sure correctly, to be a variant form of *karmaploti*. Prof. Gombrich has, however, pointed out that it could also make sense to see *pluti*, 'leap',[61] being used here in the same sense as in the Sanskrit technical term *maṇḍūkapluti*, 'a skipping of *sūtras*'.[62] *Karmapluti* would then have the slightly more specific meaning of 'karma submerged and skipped during the development of the perfections and re-emerging to be worked out in the final existence'. Eight stories in the *Avadānakalpalatā* correspond to those in the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* and the *Anavataptagāthā*, but it contains only one story of a former action connected with slander, the result of which is said to have been "slander by women". Furthermore, it does not contain any reference to the attacks on the Buddha said to have been instigated by Devadatta. It follows the *Anavataptagāthā* in setting the story about killing a man with a sword in the context of a dispute between two merchants. In the *Avadānakalpalatā*, however, the result of this is not connected with any action performed by Devadatta against the Buddha in his final existence; the Buddha is simply said to have suffered from a particular type of ulcerous sore (*khadiravraṇa*) on his foot.[63] In the episode concerning the Buddha's former birth as a wrestler, the *Avadānakalpalatā* states that the *bodhisatta* killed his opponent by breaking his back, but says that the result of this was that he suffered from fatigue rather than backache.[64] Neither the *Avadānakalpalatā* nor the *Anavataptagāthā* contain any

reference to the extra episode concerning the cowherd found in the three Thai versions of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna*. Further work is still required on the *Daśakarmmapluti* chapter of the *Avadānakalpalatā*, a slightly daunting task as it is both garbled and rambling and therefore less accessible than the succinct versions of the text contained in the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* and the *Anavataptagāthā*.

The *Avadānakalpalatā* also contains descriptions of two episodes from the former life of the Buddha which do not occur in the Pāli or Mūlasarvāstivādin versions of the text, but which do overlap with episodes related in three other corresponding texts. The first of these episodes relates to a former life in which the *bodhisatta* upset the bowl of a *paccekabuddha* (Sanskrit *pratyekabuddha*), the result of which was that he did not receive any alms food on one occasion in his final life. The second episode refers to his attempt in a former life to blame an innocent *paccekabuddha* for a fault of his own. The text states that, although he later confessed to his fault, the remnant effect of that action was that he was insulted by brahmins even after he had achieved Buddhahood. Both these events are dealt with in Part Three of the *Upāyakauśalya sūtra*, a version of which has recently been translated into English by Mark Tatz, who regards it as a *sūtra* of the early Mahāyāna school and dates it tentatively to the 1st Century BCE.[65] While the six years of austerities are referred to in the second section of the *sūtra*, it is the third section of the text, that which Tatz entitles *The Ten Karmic Connections* (reading *karmasaṃtati*), which corresponds to the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna*. It describes the unpleasant events which afflicted the Buddha in his final life in order to demonstrate that the apparent sufferings of the Buddha are inspired by his skill in means *(upāyakauśalya)* and to support a view of the Buddha as supramundane (*lokottara*). Tatz says:

> For the most part, the *Upāya* addresses incidents belonging to the common tradition that are of special concern because they seem to contradict the transcendentalist conception of Śākyamuni.[66]

The Buddha introduces the section on *karmasaṃtati* with the statement that the ten karmic connections should be regarded as "having a hidden meaning" as "there is no possiblity at all of a fault stemming from an obstacle caused by past deeds".[67] The first episode dealt with in this chapter is that in which his foot is (apparently) pierced by an acacia (*khadira*) thorn. He tells Ānanda that he killed a merchant with a spear in a previous existence, and that the injury to his foot is "the residue of the fruitition of that deed".[68] This is, however, only a stratagem to make people understand the functioning of karma and realise gnosis (*jñāna*), and he further states that the thorn is a skill in means and not "an obstacle caused by past deeds".[69] The two results which correspond to those in the *Avadānakalpalatā* are similarly said to be examples of skill in means. When the Buddha says that he returned from an almsround with an empty alms bowl, it is in order to

console other monks who receive no alms, and to inspire householders and gods to turn to his teaching.[70] This text provides an example of a specific instance of abuse rather than saying generally that the Buddha was insulted by brahmins; it states that, when he was scolded by the brahmin Bhāradvāja, it was in order that the example of his forbearance in the face of such provocation should generate the idea of enlightenment in four thousand sentient beings.

These episodes are also found in the section known as the *Upāyakauśalya-Viniścaya*, 'the analysis of skilful means', in the fourth part of the *Saṃskṛtāsaṃskṛta-Viniścaya*. This work, which is available only in Tibetan, and which has been briefly studied by Peter Skilling,[71] is:

> a wide-ranging treatment of the universe...according to a number of Buddhist schools and teachers, both of the Śrāvakayāna and the Mahāyāna.[72]

The placement of the *Upāyakauśalya-Viniścaya* within this compendium is problematic, reinforcing its connection with the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* and reflecting the nature of its response to the concept that the Buddha continued to be affected by the results of his previous bad karma. Although the list of incidents in the *Upāyakauśalya-Viniścaya* is attributed to the Sāmmitīya school, a Sthavira sect, it actually occurs in that part of the compendium which deals with Mahāyāna tenets and texts. The author, Daśabalaśrīmitra, introduces the list by stating that "According to the Ārya Sāmmitīya school, the Lord [committed] sixteen karmic lapses".[73] In this version of the text, the Buddha is said to have abused a *paccekabuddha* in a former life and, as a result, to have been himself abused by the brahmin Bhāradvāja in his final life. In another former life, he hid the alms bowl of a *paccekabuddha*, as a result of which he did not receive alms on one occasion and had to return with an empty bowl. This version of the text contains all the episodes which are found in the Pāli and Mūlasarvāstivādin versions, although the episode in which he is said to have given the wrong medicine to a patient is related twice, the second time the result is said to have been that the Buddha suffered from "the illness of langour". There are three additional episodes which have no counterpart in any of the texts previously considered, and they have been summarised as follows:

> (1) Because of the karma he created by disobeying the instructions of his teacher...the group of five monks rejected [the *bodhisattva*] as their teacher. (2) Because of the karma he created by causing dissension within the group of disciple of the sage Gaṅgiyar, his *saṅgha* became divided at the city of Kośāpara. (3) Because of the karma he created when, as a great doctor, the Lord estranged his rival from the King, his *saṅgha* was divided by Devadatta.

The citation ends with the verse:

> As a result of this karma much suffering was undergone in the hells; the related fruit of this karma is called the remainder to be experienced only.[74]

Not one of those additional episodes occurs in the last text I wish to deal with, which also does not appear to contain any account relating to abuse from a specific brahmin or from brahmins in general. This work, the *De Tis Karmaya*, is a Sinhalese prose text tentatively dated by its original cataloguer, Hugh Nevill, to before the 14th century;[75] it is available only in manuscript form. It calls itself an *akusalāpadāna sannaya*, 'a paraphrase of the *apadāna* (about) unskilful (actions)', which presumably refers to a version of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* although, as its name suggests, it is supposed to deal with a total of 32 former actions,[76] considerably more than are contained in the Pāli text. All the espisodes from the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna* are described in this work but, apart from an apparent reference to the occasion on which the Buddha was unable to obtain alms food, the additional episodes do not seem to overlap with those in the Sanskrit versions. Nevill paraphrases this as follows: "Owing to a fault in a former life, Gautama Buddha once went a day without food. The cause is not explained."[77] It does, however, contain, as its first example of a former misdeed, the story of a herdsman who would not allow his cattle to drink muddy water. This is said to have resulted in the Buddha suffering from thirst at the time of his *parinirvāṇa* and is equivalent to the extra episode which is found at the beginning of the Thai versions of the *Pubbakammapiloti Apadāna*. Nevill attributes this text to the 'heretical' Dhammarucika sect of the Abhayagiri monastery, but it may simply represent the development in Sri Lanka of a text originally brought from Thailand or Cambodia. It also includes three extra episodes which are not attested elsewhere. In the first one it is said that the Buddha had formerly accused an ascetic of being a thief, as a result of which he was abused by a drunkard. It is also said that, in a former life, he blocked the path of a *paccekabuddha* with rubbish as a result of which his path was blocked on one occasion when he set out on an alms round. Finally there is a complicated episode which Nevill summarises thus:

> In the Kusa birth, he took back some cakes allotted to a Pase-Buddha [*paccekabuddha*]. In retribution a woman gave him a plate of rice, thinking he was [the elder monk] Mahā-Kassapa. Seeing Mahā-Kassapa approach, she demanded it back.[78]

There is a further Sanskrit text, the *Karmaplotika sūtra*, which occurs as the 13th legend in the *Bodhisattvajātak-āvadānamālā* and the 56th legend in the *Jātakamālāvadānasūtra*,[79] but I have not yet been able to do any work on the copy of it which I have obtained. Study of this *sūtra* may prove to be particularly rewarding as, in both of the collections in which it is found, it is placed after a text called the *Śākyasiṃhajātaka*, which deals with the life of the Buddha up to his attainment of enlightenment. Further work on this text, and on the De Tis Karmaya, is a priority.

It is apparent that there were a number of stories of this type from which the various versions of the *pubbakammapiloti* text were compiled and that the idea of a collection of stories explaining unpleasant incidents seen to have affected the Buddha during his final life must belong to a common, and ancient, source. Peter Skilling says of these individual stories about the Buddha's bad karma:

> there is sufficient agreement between the available sources to suggest that either the basic accounts predated the fundamental schisms, or that the schools borrowed from each other.[80]

Study of the various related texts would seem to show that the basic accounts are certainly older than any divisions, the use made of the stories reflecting the attitude of the various schools to the relationship between the Buddha and the law of karma.

Notes

1. For a discussion on the place of this school's view of the Buddha as supramundane (*lokottara*) with regard to the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism, see Williams, 1989, pp. 16-20.
2. Translation Walshe, 1987, p. 128. Text DN I p. 116, 20–22. Abbreviations of Pāli texts follow those of the Epilegomena of the *Critical Pāli Dictionary*, 1948. The abbreviation ap. is for *apadāna*.
3. Translation Thomas, 1949, p. 212. Text at MN III p. 8,8–14; ≠SN III p. 66,15–18, where the statement is attributed to the Buddha.
4. Norman, 1983, p. 42.
5. Translation Walshe, 1987, p. 127. Text DN I p. 116.
6. Translation by H. Peiris and L.C. van Geyzel at Reynolds, 1970, p. 182.
7. Cleary, 1993, p. 1641.
8. Translation Khoroche, 1989, p. 10.
9. Fragments of a Turfan manuscript of the Sārvāstivādin *Kṣudrakāgama* indicate that it contained two texts identified as the *Vimānāvadāna* and *Pretāvadāna* which Bechert reveals to have been based on the same tradition as the Pāli *vatthu* collecions. See Bechert, 1974.
10. Quotations from the *apadāna* are taken from the critical edition with translation of portions of that text contained in my D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1993.
11. Translation Walshe, 1987, p. 257. Text DN II p. 127, 34–36.
12. These occur at MN I p. 354 , 25–26 and SN IV p. 184, 8.
13. See Horner, 1952, pp. 266–71.
14. Ud p. 28.
15. *Upālittherāp.* v. 133: *tena kammena ahaṃ dhīra hīnattaṃ ajjhupāgato/samatikkamma taṃ jātiṃ pāvisiṃ abhayaṃ puraṃ.*
16. *Mahāmoggallānattherāp.* v. 14: *nirayā so cavitvāna.*
17. *Ibid.* v. 15: *kusalamūlena codito.*
18. *Ibid.* vv. 18-19: *yaṃ yaṃ yon'upapajjāmi nirayaṃ atha mānusaṃ/pāpakammasamaṅgittā bhinnasīso marām' ahaṃ//idaṃ pacchimakaṃ mayhaṃ carimo vattate bhavo/idhāpi edisaṃ mayhaṃ maraṇakāle bhavissati.*
19. Th-a III p. 180,11–13.
20. See PED p. 391, s.v. *paṭa*. The term *paṭapilotikakanthikā*, 'wearers of patched rag robes', is also found in Hofinger, 1982, p. 195.
21. Peter Masefield suggests "karmic fluff" in his tranlation of the section of the *Udāna* Commentary in which this *apadāna* is quoted in full. See Masefield, 1994, translation pp. 632–35 and extensive notes pp. 713–22.

22. Ud-a p. 263,12-26.
23. It is number 390 in all editions of the *Therāpadāna* except that published by the Pali Text Society where it is number 387.
24. The *Visuddhajanavilāsinī* does not contain any commentary on the *Therī-apadāna*, although its anonymous author refers to the number of *apadānas* in that section at the beginning of his commentary e.g. Ap-a p. 101, 20. For the date of this commentary (post-eleventh century) see Cousins, 1972.
25. These nine poems are, however, included in the most recent editions of the *apadāna* in Burmese, Devanāgarī and Sinhala scripts. This is probably due to attempts by the modern editors to reconstruct the very corrupt text of the collection with the help of the commentary, although this is not indicated in the notes on the text.
26. See Norman, 1983, p. 92; Walters, 1990, pp. 77–9; and Skilling, 1992, pp. 137–43.
27. This possibility was first raised in Bechert, 1958, pp. 10–12.
28. See Malalasekera, 1974, pp. 96–9.
29. They are also found in several *apadāna-s* attributed to elder nuns e.g. the *Yasodharā therī-apadāna* but and their presence in poems of the *Therī-apadāna* requires further study.
30. Walters, 1990, p. 88.
31. This categorisation is given in Walters, 1990, p. 71.
32. *Pubbakammapiloti* ap. v. 3: *suṇātha bhikkhavo mayhaṃ yaṃ kammaṃ pakataṃ mayā/pilotikassa kammassa buddhatte pi vipaccati.*
33. DN II pp. 128–9. Translation in Walshe, 1987, pp. 257–8.
34. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* vv. 5 and 6.
35. See Malalasekera, 1974, pp. 1216–7.
36. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* v.7cd: *taṃ abbhakhāya niraye ciraṃ saṃsaritaṃ mayā.*
37. See Malalasekera, 1974, p. 864.
38. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* vv. 10–14.
39. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* v. 15: *vemātubhātaraṃ pubbe dhanahetu haniṃ ahaṃ/pakkhipiṃ giriduggasmiṃ silāya ca apiṃsayiṃ.* Pādas ab are quoted in the *Milinda-ṭīkā* p. 26,20.
40. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* v. 18: *tena kammavipākena idha pacchimake bhave/vadhatthaṃ maṃ devadatto abhimāre payojayi.*
41. Ap-a p. 123,5–6: *tena kammavipākena buddhabhūtassa me sato/paviddhesi silaṃ tattha Devadatto vighātavā.*
42. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* v. 20: *tena kammavipākena bhanto nālāgiri gajo/giribbaje puravare dāruṇo maṃ upāgami. Bhanto*, 'uncontrolled', appears to be intended as a causative here.
43. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* vv. 21cd-22: *tena kammavipākena niraye paccisaṃ bhusaṃ//kammuno tassa sesena idāni sakalaṃ mama/pāde chavi pakopesi na hi kammaṃ vinassati.*
44. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* v. 23: *ahaṃ kevaṭṭagāmasmiṃ ahuṃ kevaṭṭadārako/macchake ghātite disvā janayiṃ somanassakaṃ.*
45. See Malalasekera, 1974, pp. 171–2 and 876–7.
46. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* vv. 25–26.
47. *Pubbsakammapiloti ap.* v. 27.
48. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* v. 28.
49. *Pubbakammapiloti ap.* v. 29cd: *kuto nu bodhi muṇḍassa bodhi paramadullabha.*
50. Lamotte refers to it as the *Pañcaśatasthavirāvadāna* and says that it was translated into Chinese in 303 CE (Lamotte, 1988, p. 692).
51. See Hofinger, 1990, pp. 123–8. See also Bechert, 1961.
52. Hofinger calls this poetic version the *Buddhāvadāna* although, in his review of Hofinger's translation, Peter Skilling points out that there is no evidence for such a title in the text itself and states that it "seems to be an invention of the author."
53. Hofinger, 1982, pp. 175–7.
54. Hofinger, 1990, p. 123: "Ce que j'ai commis, moi aussi, comme péchés (*pāpakarman*), écoutez-en ce récit de ma bouche".
55. See Hofinger, 1982, e.g. pp. 199, 202, 205 etc.
56. Hofinger, 1990, p. 85, note 2.
57. See MW p. 715 and BHSD p. 395.
58. Harrison, 1995, p. 11.
59. See Bechert, 1961, p. 21 and *Therāpadāna* 389: *thero koṭivīso soṇo bhikkhusaṅghassa aggato/pañhaṃ puṭṭho viyākāsi anotatte mahāsare ti.*

60. Mitra, 1882, pp. 57–8.
61. MW p. 715.
62. MW p. 776.
63. *Avadānakalpalatā* 50 v. 57. Tucci (1949) says here that the Buddha's foot was "pierced by a khadira thorn". This is similar to Hofinger's interpretation and may indicate either a different term being used in Tibetan versions of this text, or a different understanding of the term *khadiravraṇa*.
64. *Avadānakalpalatā* 50 vv. 138–39.
65. See also Harrison, 1995, p. 9.
66. Tatz, 1994, p. 9.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
71. Skilling, in his 1987 article, tentatively dates this work to the 12th or 13th Century CE.
72. Skilling, 1987, p. 3.
73. Skilling unpublished.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Somadasa, 1989, p. 123.
76. Neither of the manuscripts which I consulted , albeit superficially, in the British Library contained references to as many as 32 misdeeds, and the manuscripts did not agree on the number of episodes or on their content.
77. Somadasa, 1989, p. 123.
78. *Ibid.*
79. See Hahn, 1992.
80. Skilling unpublished.

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The Nature of the Repetition in the Indian Idea of Cyclical Time*

Lynn Thomas

Although the fact that the Indian model of time is cyclical is never seriously at issue, the precise nature of the repetition implied by this pattern does pose some problems, a point which is examined by A. N. Balslev in *A Study of Time in Indian Philosophy.*[1] Balslev draws attention to the fact that significantly different ideas can be designated 'cyclical' and argues that it is important to clarify the nature of the Indian theory. It becomes clear why this is so important when she presents the criticisms of the Greek concept of 'circular' time offered by St Augustine in *The City of God.* Faced with this model of time from the standpoint of Christian salvation doctrine St Augustine reacts with horror:

> ... as those others think, the same measures of time and the same events in time are repeated in circular fashion: on the basis of this cyclical theory, it is argued, for example, that, just as in a certain age the philosopher Plato taught his students in the city of Athens ..., so during countless past ages, at very prolonged yet definite intervals, the same Plato, the same city, and the same school has existed again and again, and during countless ages to come will exist again and again. Heaven forbid, I repeat, that we should believe that. For Christ died once for our sins ...[2]

Although this passage relates to cultural and religious milieux foreign to India the problem raised by such a view of time is one inherent for any soteriological system. An exactly repeating cycle must, by definition, preclude any meaningful soteriology for eternal salvation, in any form, necessarily demands an escape route from a cycle of time. In St Augustine's terms, if Christ dies in an infinite repetition any salvation resulting from his death must only be temporary; in Indian terms, if the individual's struggle

* I would like to thank John Brockington for his comments on this paper and Nick Allen and Jim Benson for their comments on an earlier version.

from ignorance to emancipation must be repeated in every cycle *mokṣa* also becomes simply another passing and contingent state, rather than a definitive release from such states. That this idea would be as repugnant to Hindu religious thought as it was to St Augustine is shown by Śaṃkara's reaction to such an idea when he argues that if assumptions are allowed as a form of reasoning, there is nothing to stop "a malicious man from assuming that even the released souls are to enter on a new cycle of existences".[3]

Balslev argues that despite some scholars' assumptions that the Indian idea follows the Greek one in this particular, Indian texts do not, in fact, present such a "completely deterministic, fatalistic" model:[4]

> ... the world-cycles can be compared to one another in terms of generic similarity just as one day resembles another, but the idea of exact repetition involving the return of the particulars does not occur.[5]

Balslev's study is mainly concerned with the discussion of time in Indian philosophical works and has little to say about its treatment in the broader literature of the epics and *Purāṇas*. As these popular texts will have done more to inform general Hindu thinking on the subject than any others, it is worth examining the nature of the repetitition they present to see how far it concurs with the more sophisticated understanding of the philosophers.

The exact nature of the repetition in the cycle and its potential problems seem to have been of relatively little concern to the epic and *Purāṇic* composers. There are very few references to the topic in the many passages on time and creation and nowhere does it seem to have been discussed or defined in the detail explored by the Greeks and their commentators. In the *Mahābhārata* although the most common image for the endlessly repeating cycles of time and the world is that of a wheel perpetually turning – *kālacakraṃ jagaccakraṃ yugacakraṃ ca* [6] – only a few passages touch on the nature of the repetition involved in this. In the first of these, which occurs at the end of the account of creation at the beginning of the epic, the cycle of creation and destruction is likened to the turning of the seasons:

> *yad idaṃ dṛśyate kiṃcid bhūtaṃ sthāvarajaṅgamam*
> *punaḥ saṃkṣipyate sarvaṃ jagat prāpte yugakṣaye* (36)
>
> *yathartāv ṛtuliṅgāni nānārūpāṇi paryaye*
> *dṛśyante tāni tāny eva tathā bhāvā yugādiṣu* (37)
>
> *evaṃ etad anādyantaṃ bhūtasaṃhārakārakam*
> *anādinidhanaṃ loke cakraṃ saṃparivartate* (38)

> Whatever is seen to exist here, standing and moving, this whole world is destroyed again when the end of the *yuga* arrives. (36)
>
> As the manifold seasonal signs successively appear when the season changes, so too do existences at the beginnings of the *yugas*. (37)

Thus is this wheel, beginningless and endless, turning in the world, endlessly causing creation and destruction. (38) [7]

This model of seasonal change is again taken up by Nīlakaṇṭha's commentary on a variant reading of 12.211.38:

ṛtuḥ saṃvatsaras tithyaḥ [variant: tiṣyaḥ] śītoṣṇe ca priyāpriye
yathātītāni paśyanti tādṛśaḥ sattvasaṃkṣayaḥ

Nīlakaṇṭha – tiṣyaḥ kalir iti yugānām upalakṣaṇam

Seasons, years, *tiṣyas* [taking variant], heat and cold, likes and dislikes - as these reappear when they have passed, such is the case with the destruction of entities.

Nīlakaṇṭha – *tiṣya* is *'kali'*: by this is implied the *yugas*.

Another passage, however, not included in the Critical Edition, seems to offer a more rigid interpretation of the nature of the repetition:

[Śiva speaking]
dakṣa dakṣa na kartavyo manyur vighnam imaṃ prati.
yajahaṃ ňaharas tubhyaṃ dṛṣṭam etat purātanam

Dakṣa, Dakṣa, do not be angry about this obstruction [to your sacrifice]. In former times it was seen that I was the destroyer of your sacrifice. [8]

However, although at first sight this could be taken as presenting the idea of identical cycles, the relevant phrase – *dṛṣṭam etat purātanam* – remains ambiguous and could simply signify that the action was ordained: it was previously (fore)seen.

In the *Purāṇas* the subject is treated in scarcely more detail but there are a few references which again could suggest the idea of exact repetition. In the *Kūrma Purāṇa* the following verse occurs twice, firstly after a passage on the computations of time[9] and then following a description of the four *yugas*:[10]

manvantareṇa caikeṇa sarvāṇy evāntarāṇi vai vyākhyātāni na saṃdehaḥ kalpaḥ kalpena caiva hi

By one *manvantara* all *antaras* are explained, have no doubt, and by one *kalpa*, each *kalpa*.

The verb used in this verse is √*khyā*, with the preverbs *vi* and *ā*, meaning 'explain, fully detail, relate, tell'. It does not seem to have the sense of 'describe' and could simply refer to the durations of these periods rather than their characteristic natures. This is certainly the more natural reading of the verse following the computations of time.

A set of verses which are obviously related to each other occurs in the *Manusmṛti*, *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, all following accounts of Brahmā creating the inhabitants of the world.[11] The following is the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* account:

tat sasarja tadā brahmā bhagavān ādikṛd vibhuḥ
teṣāṃ ye yāni karmāṇi prāk sṛṣṭyāṃ pratipedire (59)

tāny eva te prapadyante sṛjyamānāḥ punaḥ punaḥ
hiṃsrāhiṃsre mṛdukrūre dharmādharmāv ṛtānṛte
tadbhāvitāḥ prapadyante tasmāt tat tasya rocate ... (60)

yathartāv ṛtuliṅgāni nānārūpāṇi paryaye
dṛśyante tāni tāny eva tathā bhāvā yugādiṣu (64)

karoty evaṃvidhāṃ sṛṣṭiṃ kalpādau sa punaḥ punaḥ
sisṛkṣāśaktiyukto 'sau sṛjyaśaktipracoditaḥ (65) [12]

Then the blessed creator, Lord Brahmā, created it all. Creatures who performed the actions/received back the *karmas* which were theirs in the previous creation, (59)

Being created again and again, return to precisely those same actions/*karmas*. Cruelty or non-injury, gentleness or fierceness, *dharma* or *adharma*, right or wrong – produced from that, they return to it; therefore they delight in it ...(60)

Just as the manifold seasonal signs are seen when the season changes, so too are these conditions seen at the beginnings of the *yugas*.(64) [13]

Wilson, Bühler and Pargiter all translate the crucial v.59 and its equivalents in such a way that the idea of identical repetition is emphasised:

> Wilson [*Viṣṇu* v.59]: "And these things ... discharged the same functions as they had fulfilled in a previous creation ..."[14]
>
> Bühler [*Manu* v.28]: "But to whatever course of action the Lord at first appointed each (kind of beings), that alone it has spontaneously adopted in each succeeding creation."[15]
>
> Pargiter [*Mārk* v.39]: "Whatever actions they were severally endowed with originally at their creation, those very actions they are endowed with when they are created again and again." [16]

However, once again a closer examination shows that the ambiguous use of the word *karma*, which can designate either action in general or, more specifically, those actions which form and condition future states, means that an exact repetition of previous actions in future *kalpas* is not the only possible interpretation. Certainly, it is not an interpretation that occurs to Medhātithi in his *Manubhāṣya*. Not only are these verses not seen to espouse identical repetition, this is not even one of the possible erroneous interpretations he considers. Instead he takes *karma* in the sense of the accumulation of actions and their results, so that beings are allocated their place at the start of the present creation in accordance with their actions in the last, a quite different emphasis and one which presents no problems for Hindu soteriology. For Medhātithi, in these verses Brahmā creates beings:

> … not without reference to the actions done by them during the preceding cycles; he makes the creature born in that family of creatures which is indicated by the act done by it during the previous cycle … if the creature has, in the past, done a good act, it is led to be born in a family in which it would be enabled to experience the good results of that act … What happens is that at the beginning of each new creation, the acts done by creatures in the previous cycle come out, after having, during Dissolution, lain latent within their source …[17]

An earlier verse in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* account reinforces Medhātithi's interpretation and makes it clear that *karma* is being used in the specific sense of past actions conditioning future states:

> Creation is impregnated with the good and bad actions of previous existence – *pūrvakarmabhiḥ* –, O brahman; and because of this well-known law, created beings, though they are destroyed in the dissolution, are not delivered from the consequences of their actions.[18]

While Medhātithi's *Manubhāṣya* is obviously a later interpretation of the text, the fact that the tradition has interpreted these potentially ambigious verses in a way that does not necessitate the idea of an exact repetition, serves to reinforce Balslev's argument that this is not the Indian model. Certainly, if exact repetition were being presented in these passages it could not co-exist with any system of Indian soteriology. That this is not the intention can be supported most obviously by the fact that a soteriological escape from the cycle is deliberately written into the theory of time and, according to Biardeau, largely makes up its purpose in the fate of liberated beings at the time of the *pralaya* who, having attained the highest state, are finally released to union with *brahman*.[19] Other aspects of the *yuga* theory also directly contradict the idea of an identical repetition. For example, although Brahmā is born at the beginning of each cycle and performs the same functions at this time, the details of his birth are different in each *kalpa*. Similarly, while the fourteen *manvantara* periods which subdivide the cycle always occur, they are presided over by different Manus, *saptarṣis* and gods each time.[20]

Such a co-existence of the same events with different particulars suggests that it is most likely that the repetition was understood on the model of the image most abidingly used, namely, the turning of the seasons, an image found in the *Mahābhārata*, *Harivaṃśa*, and *Manusmṛti*, as well as at least the *Viṣṇu* and *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇas*.[21] Such an image of time, while making the units correspond in the overall pattern of occurrences, does not necessitate an exact repetition of events: just as every spring plants come to life and every autumn they die, but not the same plants, so too at the beginning of every cycle events are set in motion and different categories of beings are created to play them out, but not the same beings. As the *manvantara* theory

and many dialogues in the *Mahābhārata* show, even the lesser gods are not presented as individuals but rather as roles to be filled by different players at different times.[22] This would confirm the model of 'generic similarity' that Balslev argues for and which seems much more likely to lie behind the Indian model than an idea of circular repetition.

Notes

1. Balslev, 1983. pp. 140-50.
2. Augustine, *City of God*, Book XII, chapter XIV, cited Balslev, *Ibid.*, pp. 141-2.
3. Śaṃkara, *Vedānta Sūtra* (1.2.17), cited Balslev, *Ibid.*, p. 147.
4. Balslev, *Ibid.*, p. 149.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
6. 5.66.12. This and all *Mahābhārata* references are to Sukthankar, et. al. (eds.), 1933 [1970].
7. 1.1.36-38.
8. 12.App.I.28.397-8.
9. *Kūrma Purāṇa* 1.5.14. This and all *Kūrma Purāṇa* references are to Gupta, (ed.), 1972.
10. *Kūrma Purāṇa* 1.28.52.
11. *Manusmṛti* 1.28-30; *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 48.39-44; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.5.59-60,64-65. *Mahābhārata* 12.224.47,48 has the same wording as *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 48.39,40 but does not go on to give the analogy with the seasons.
12. Verse 64 is the same as *Mahābhārata* 1.1.37 discussed above.
13. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.5.59-60,64. This and all *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* references are to Vidyasagara, 1882.
14. Wilson, 1840, p. 43
15. Bühler, 1967, p. 13, translating: *yaṃ tu karmani yasmin sa nyayuṅkta prathamaṃ prabhuḥ/ sa tad eva svayaṃ bheje sṛjyamānaḥ punaḥ punaḥ.*
16. Pargiter, 1904, p. 236, translating: *teṣāṃ ye yāni karmāṇi prāk sṛṣṭeḥ pratipedire/ tāny eva pratipadyante sṛjyamānaḥ punaḥ punaḥ.*
17. Jha, 1920, p. 67.
18. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 48.2, translated by Pargiter (1904) p. 235.
19. See *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 6.3; *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 233. Biardeau discusses the significance of the fate of beings during the *pralaya* in great detail, and it plays an important part in her interpretation of the structuring of time in the *Purāṇas*: see M. Biardeau, 1971.
20. See, for example, *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 46.32,33
21. *Mahābhārata* 1.1.37; *Manusmṛti* 1.30; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.5.64; *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 48.44 (all discussed above); *Harivaṃśa* 7.54.142* lines 13,14.
22. See, for example, the story of the five Indras in *Mahābhārata* 1.189.

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Viṣṇu and the Dance of Śiva

David Smith, Lancaster University

A striking feature of Naṭarāja's temple in Cidambaram is the right-angled conjunction of the shrines of Śiva (Naṭarāja) and Viṣṇu (Govindarāja). At one point, marked as a lotus on the stone floor, the worshipper can – with a flickering of the gaze to and fro – view both the south-facing King of Dancers and the east-facing King Cowherd. This joint presence of the two major deities has often been remarked upon. B. Natarajan, who in his recent *Tillai and Nataraja* devotes a chapter to the Govindarāja shrine, is no doubt correct when he says that Cidambaram is "the most conspicuous example of a religious centre where Śiva and Viṣṇu co-exist".[1] This paper considers the presence of Viṣṇu near Dancing Śiva and examines the Śaiva attitude to Viṣṇu in Cidambaram during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The conjunction of the two shrines has given rise to various theological speculations, as is only natural. Thus T. G. Aravamuthan sets out to show:

> ... that, in its origin as a great religious centre, it was marked by the conviction of the Oneness of God–head. Chidambaram was, in fact, a place where the Unity of God–head is averred and is sustained.[2]
>
> The Chidambaram Temple, with both Nārāyaṇa and Nata–raja coalesced into One God, though shown separated as two, is fine proof of the continuance to these days of the spirit of integration of Gods into a Tad Ekam, 'That One', which is the distinguishing mark of the *Ṛg-Veda*. Man's desires kept him appealing to this God or that, and kept him making offerings as it pleased him for the moment. None-the-less, deep in him lay, and lies the conviction that all the Gods appealed to are but facets of one God–hood. And as we find at Chidambaram, the devotee was ever taught to exhibit his abiding belief in that Unity.[3]

S. Sankaranarayanan argues that:

> The Vedic scholars of Chidambaram seem to have felt that this symbol, Naṭeśa, is based more on the Ṛgvedic theme of the creation of the universe

> from the raised foot of the Supreme and that it does not fully answer to the Upaniṣadic specification of the reclining *Ākāśa* (*śete*) as the cause of the Universe. So those Vedists seem to have strongly felt the need for an additional symbol to represent this reclining *Ākāśa Ātman* ... the *Ākāśa* could be represented only in an indirect way by means of what is indicated by the expression *viṣṇupada*. This expression, being a homonym, can denote ... also the very Viṣṇu Himself, because He has the name (*pada*, i.e., *nāma-pada*) *Viṣṇu*. Further, among all gods He alone is known to have reclining posture as Śeṣaśāyī. So the Vedists decided to have a Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu figure for a symbol they required.[4]

These theological musings must, however, be reviewed in the light of the historical assessment which I shall attempt after having first given an account of the shrine as it exists today. The Cidambaram temple is huge, covering some 33 acres, including the gardens that are contained within its outermost walls. The first and innermost enclosure contains the supreme shrine of Dancing Śiva, the Hall of Consciousness, the Cit Sabhā, facing south, with its distinctive curved roof covered in gold leaf. Immediately in front of this is an almost identical structure, wherein worship of Naṭarāja and of a small, portable, crystal *liṅga* is performed. A courtyard with minor shrines surrounds the twin halls to the west, north, and east. The south-west part of the enclosure is taken up by the shrine of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu lies on Śeṣa, and faces north, towards Naṭarāja. A separate entrance for the Viṣṇu shrine is provided in the east wall of the enclosure, with a flagpole just outside. The rectangular *garbhagṛha* of the shrine has a barrel roof, and has an *ardhamaṇḍapa* and a *pradakṣiṇa patha* (circumambulation passage). The sanctity of the site and the legal wrangles over the centuries make investigation difficult, but the present buildings of the Viṣṇu shrine are plainly not old.[5]

Natarajan gives the following description of the contents of the shrine:

> Within the Govindaraja shrine, we have sub-shrines dedicated to Hiraṇyanarasiṃha, Sudarśana, Veṇugopāla, Yoganarasiṃha, Hanumān, Viṣvaksena, the Rāmapādas, Rāmānuja and Kūrattāḻvāṉ. In a huge, impressive, solemn stone sculpture, the presiding deity, Govindarāja, is shown reclining on His serpent-couch, the seven-headed Ādiśeṣa, in *yoga-nidrā*, head to the south and with Brahmā seated on a lotus emanating from His navel, and looking northwards. The *utsava* icons made of metal, of Śrīnivāsa with Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī, are located in front of Govindarāja. Around them are located images of Pārthasārathi, Āṇṭāḷ, Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, and the *utsava vigrahas* of Nammāḻvār, Kulacēkaraṉāḻvār, Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār, Rāmānuja and Maṇavāḷa mā Muṉi.[6]

As already noted, this shrine faces east, and is at a right angle to the Naṭarāja shrine. Soma Sethu Dikshithar in his Guide to the temple refers to the spot on the floor marked by the lotus:

> This is the place where one can see both the deities at the same time … . It is said by elders that one should see Lord Govindarāja through the left eye and Lord Naṭarāja through the right. The significance of this is that the left side of Lord Śiva is the part of Viṣṇu who is embodiment of Śivaśakti.[7]

Here again there is a theological gloss on the co-presence of the two divinities. But discussion of the innermost courtyard of Naṭarāja's temple is not complete without remarking on what is absent. This enclosure does not contain the 'Original Shrine' of Cidambaram, the *liṅga* shrine, the Mūlanātha. This is situated in the second enclosure. Also in the second enclosure is the oldest structure in the temple, in terms of architectural style, namely the Nṛtta Sabhā (though the plinths of the twin Sabhās might be as old). The Nṛtta Sabhā, built no later than the reign of Kulottuṅga III (1178–1216), is a pavilion on a high plinth that contains a shrine to Ūrdhvatāṇḍava Śiva, and also a shrine to Śarabheśa Śiva. Both shrines seem to be additions to the original structure, the arrangement of the pillars of which seems to be designed to allow space for a single dancer in the central area. The structure is provided with a wheel and a horse on its east and west sides at the south end, and is thus a chariot, being drawn towards the Cit Sabhā. This detail of the structure is easily forgotten today, since almost all of horse and wheel is now covered over with concrete. The supposed movement of this shrine is all the less likely because of the obstruction of the wall of the first enclosure. But the essential point to be made is that both these shrines are intimately connected with Naṭarāja but are not in the first enclosure. Viṣṇu, as Govindarāja, is in the first enclosure; and we have seen three brief theological interpretations of this. Let us now consider the textual history of the Viṣṇu shrine.

The earliest reference to Viṣṇu in Cidambaram is found in Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār (second half of eighth century AD); both he and Kulacēkaraṉ Āḻvār (ninth century) refer to the "three thousand" priests, which would seem to mean that the Viṣṇu shrine was under the control of the Śaiva Dīkṣitas, who have always been known as the "three thousand". Tirumaṅkai Āḻvār encourages people to go Citrakūṭa in Tillai (*Periyatirumoḻi* III. 2) and deeds of various *avatāras* are alluded to; and the next song refers to the childhood adventures of Kṛṣṇa, who is said to be "inside Citrakūṭam of Tillai (*Periyatirumoḻi* III. 3).[8] Kulacēkaraṉ dedicates *Perumāḷ–Tirumoḻi* X to Rāma in "Citrakūṭa of the town of Tillai", where Rāma is seated on a throne with beautiful jewels (X. 2).[9]

Next in point of time is the *Tirukkōvaiyār*, a complex and difficult text, attributed to Māṇikkavācakar (ninth or tenth century):

> To seek the feet of Him who destroyed the three fortresses
> Viṣṇu (as a boar) bored the earth and when stymied
> Surfaced up and prayed thus: 'O my Father, grant me grace.'
> He that endowed me with twin hands to adore His feet twain,

> Thereupon relented a little and showed him one of His feet.
> (Thus blessed) he continues to beseech Him at Tillai's court
> For the boon of revelation of the other foot also.[10]

B. Natarajan takes the standard view when he says of this verse that it is "the poetic imagery of Saivite poet reflecting the fact that these two Lords of the Trinity dwelt together in the Hall of Tillai" (p. 27). However, none of the passages so far considered explicitly refers to a Viṣṇu shrine beside Naṭarāja. Viṣṇu is described as lying prostrate before Śiva's shrine. This follows very naturally from the reference to Viṣṇu as Boar seeking the base of the *liṅga*, a common motif on the outer western wall of the *garbhagṛha* in Śiva temples.

The next reference to Viṣṇu comes a century or two later, in the long and informative inscription that details the works done in Cidambaram by Naralokavīra, in the reign of Kulottuṅga I (1070–1120). Naralokavīra is usually said to have been an "officer of Kulottuṅga I", but is perhaps more likely to have been a semi-autonomous war-lord. Verse 23 of 120 of 1888 says that Naralokavīra consecrated an image of Nandīśa, Nandīśa whose permission had to be sought by Viṣṇu (Vaikuṇṭha) and the other gods each day as they stood outside before they could come in and bow down before Śiva. The absence of any reference to a shrine of Viṣṇu in this detailed account of the temple is striking.

Oṭṭakkūttan's poems in praise of Kulottuṅga II (1133–1150), and the same poet's *Takkayākaparaṇi*, all refer to that monarch's removal of Viṣṇu from Tillai and dropping the deity in the ocean, his original home. This is generally assumed to have been a hostile act; and yet immersion of images in the ocean is a regular form of devotion. Naralokavīra built a *maṇḍapa* on the sea-shore for that very purpose for Naṭarāja (verse 6, 120 of 1888).[11]

Also during the reign of Kulottuṅga II was written the *sthalapurāṇa* of Cidambaram, the *Cidambara Māhātmya*.[12] Here Viṣṇu plays a prominent part, though completely subordinate, in events leading to the first performance of Śiva's Dance of Bliss, the *ānanda–tāṇdava*. In a sophisticated narrative device, Viṣṇu in the Milk Ocean first calls out to Śiva while in a state of trance; and Śeṣa, the snake who forms his couch, feels his master become very heavy. It transpires that this is because Viṣṇu is remembering the events earlier in the day. He had gone as usual to Kailāsa to pay his respects to Śiva, and was told by Śiva to take on the form of a woman, for they were going to the Devadāru Forest to assess the sages there. Śiva himself would go as the Divine Beggar, Bhikṣāṭana. The *sthalapurāṇa* refers to standard Purāṇic myth when Śiva arouses the desire of the sages' wives, but is decidedly innovatory in having him accompanied by Viṣṇu as Mohinī. When the sages attack Śiva with creatures from their sacrificial fire, he defeats these new opponents and assimilates them into his iconography. He then dances the Dance of Bliss, with the sages and Viṣṇu as his audience.

Viṣṇu also features in an earlier part of the *Cidambara Māhātmya*, when he is said to have brought the Milk Ocean to Cidambaram. When all the gods come to Cidambaram to see Śiva's Dance, Viṣṇu brings his Milk Ocean, and making it his couch, witnesses the Dance of Bliss (7. 31–2). But this Vaiṣṇava presence is equalled by Śiva supplying an ocean of milk for Upamanyu, Vyāghrapāda's son, in a tank to the north of the temple (a tank recently filled in to make a school playground).

I pass over here later legends that the Viṣṇu image was, after its removal by Kulottuṅga II, taken by Vaiṣṇavas to Lower Tirupati and there consecrated by Rāmānuja, and consider next the explicit reference to the Viṣṇu image made by Umāpati in his *Kuñcitāṅghristava*, around 1300.[13]

> Even today to His right
> Viṣṇu in his jewelled shrine
>
> is lying on the couch of the coils
> of the five-headed Lord of Snakes
> with his feet to the south and his face to the north.
>
> Although he is always asleep,
> he constantly meditates
> on His praiseworthy foot.
> ... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 42)[14]

Here at last is an explicit reference to the image of Viṣṇu in the Naṭarāja temple and to the existence of the shrine (*sadana*); Umāpati's poem gives a very full acount of the temple. The verse clearly shows that worship of Viṣṇu did not, as Kulke and many others have claimed, cease after Kulottuṅga for a long period. A century and a half after Kulottuṅga it was alive and well. A minor difference is that Śeṣa is said to have five heads, whereas today it has seven heads. What is particularly noteworthy is that Umāpati says that the image has its face to the north and its feet to the south. This is the reverse of the orientation of the image today; it also corresponds, incidentally, in orientation at least, with the reference in the *Tirukkōvaiyār* to Viṣṇu lying prostrate before Śiva.

Umāpati makes one other explicit reference to Viṣṇu's shrine (*geha*), along with four other independent shrines, these others being in the third enclosure:

> the shrines
> of the Blessed Mūlasthāna,
> Devī, Viṣṇu, Elephant-faced Vināyaka, and Skanda.
> ... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 76)

In modern times 'the five shrines' are frequently spoken of by the priests, but the Viṣṇu shrine is no concern of the Śaivas, and the Cit Sabhā is included to make up the five.[15]

The first inscriptional evidence of a Viṣṇu shrine in the Naṭarāja temple does not come until 1539. Inscription 272 of 1913 tells that Acyutadevarāya had ordered the consecration of the Tillai Govindarāja in Cidambaram, according to the rituals of the *Vaikhānasa Sūtra*, with the income of four villages for the upkeep of daily worship. It is after this consecration that Appayya Dīkṣita is popularly supposed to have written his hymn to Harihara, the *Hariharastuti*. These eight or ten verses are sometimes said to be called *Hariharābhedastuti*, but in fact this is a series of epithets, one to Viṣṇu followed in each case by one to Śiva, with the weight of emphasis falling on the second and Śaiva epithet. In the eight verse version, the only one available to me,[16] there is no mention of Cidambaram or Naṭarāja, and it may well be that later tradition invented the connection with the two shrines of today.

Evidence of very serious disagreement between Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas in Cidambaram is furnished in 1599 by Pimenta, a Jesuit travelling through South India:

> In our way wee saw Cidambaram the mother Citie of their Superstitions, furnished with gorgeous Temples. Their Brachmanes have thirties thousand Duckets revenue, whereof but twelve thousand are now payed.
> The Naichus of Gingi was come thither, in whose Dominion it standeth ... The Next day wee went away, which we had not done, had any told us of a strange Spectacle that day there to bee seene, which wee after came certainly to know.
> There were twentie Priests which they call Jogues, which threw themselves from the highest pinnacle of the Temple for this cause. There is a Temple of Perimal, in which is worshipped an Ape called Hanimant, whom they report to have been a God ... Now at this time was a great Controversie amongst these Gentiles, whether it were lawfull to place the Signe of Perimal (which is nothing but a Mast or Pole gilded, with an Ape at the foot) in the Temple of Cidambaram. Some refused, others by their Legats importunately urged, and the Naichus of Gingi Decreed to erect it in the Temple, the Priests of the Temple which were the Treasurers, withstanding, and threatning if it were done to caste downe themselves from the top. The Brachmanes of the Temple sware to doe the like after they had buried the former, which yet after better advise they performed not. About twentie had perished in that precipitation on that day of our departure; whereat the Naichus angrie, caused his Gunners to shoot at the rest, which killed two of them, the rest wandering in uncertaine places. A Woman also was so hote in this zealous quarrell that shee cut her owne throat. The Mast with the Ape was nevertheless erected.[17]

Today, the subsidiary status of the Govindarāja shrine is revealed by the fact that it is not allowed to raise a flag on its flagpole. I shall return to Pimenta's account in my conclusion.

After this review of the textual evidence relating directly to Viṣṇu in Cidambaram up to the end of the sixteenth century, which shows Umāpati (*c.* 1300) to have been the first to make unmistakable mention of the shrine, I turn now to the general iconography of the temple, in relation to Viṣṇu.

A very clear statement of the relative importance of deities is made by the *gopuras* of the temple gateway, three of which were completed in the thirteenth century. All four share a common sculptural programme. The first of the two stories in stone presents a variety of figures, one of whom is Viṣṇu; the second storey is composed of a variety of forms of Śiva. Each *gopura* has on its inner facade a sculpture of Viṣṇu mounted on a human two–armed Garuḍa. Viṣṇu's rear hands hold the discus and conch, the front hands are in *añjali* and plainly manifest his devotion as he looks inwards to Naṭarāja in the centre of the temple. Each of the *gopuras* also has Śiva appearing from within the *liṅga* with Brahmā and Viṣṇu searching for its limits. Moreover, when Śiva is shown as Ūrdhvatāṇḍava, the figures on the Western and Eastern *gopuras* have an accompanying drummer who wears a crown and might therefore be Viṣṇu (the *Kāñcīmāhātmya* story of Viṣṇu becoming Naṭarāja's drummer is discussed below). Even if the drummer is not Viṣṇu, the *gopuras* could hardly state the subordinate status of Viṣṇu more plainly. Viṣṇu is clearly shown as drummer at the right hand side of the Ūrdhvatāṇḍavamūrti in the Nṛtta Sabhā, with Kālī at the left. These are the only Viṣṇu images outside the Viṣṇu shrine, and are clearly older than that shrine.

The final evidence I wish to present in this consideration of Viṣṇu in Cidambaram is the general attitude to Viṣṇu expressed by Umāpati in the *Kuñcitāṅghristava*. This poem is a personal statement by a notable priest of the temple, and may fairly be said to express the world-view of Cidambaram Śaivas around 1300. We have already considered Umāpati's description of the Govindarāja shrine. Shortly before this, in his poem Umāpati refers to the principal event of the *sthala-purāṇa*:

> In the beginning Śambhu the Mild along with Mohinī
> was strolling in the dense wood called Dāruka.
>
> Deluding by His beauty the wives of the Brahmans,
> and that throng of silent sages by Viṣṇu's illusion,
> nullifying the magic attack the Brahmans staged,
>
> He took pity on the Brahmans, and displayed His Dance.
> Him, the Dweller on the mountain,
> Whose foot is curved,
> I worship. (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 40)[18]

That Śiva should go as Bhikṣāṭana is no illusion, for that is one of his major forms and, it should be mentioned, one of the two most prominent representations of Śiva on the *gopuras*. Viṣṇu's form as voluptuous woman is, however, not merely an instance of that God's power of illusion,

but also an instance of the literary powers of the creator of the *sthala-purāṇa*. The utter passivity of Viṣṇu's role allows his presence to be emphasized without giving any scope for claims of his importance in Cidambaram.

Viṣṇu's femininity is again referred to later in the poem:

> His face all the more like a night lotus come alive
> from the stream of clear nectar from the moon on His crown,
> delightful with His unrestrained song.
>
> In the forest He held immobile
> the throng of the sages' wives,
> He, the complete embodiment of the erotic,
>
> Seeing Him, Viṣṇu's illusory form
> determined to marry Him.
> ... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 130)[19]

The preceding verse subordinates Viṣṇu to an external female: alluding to the *Lalitopākhyāna*, Umāpati posits the Goddess's fingernails as the source of Viṣṇu's *avatāras*:

> Creating the *avatāra* portions of Viṣṇu
> on the battlefield with her ten nails
>
> ...
>
> With His missile she destroyed the Daitya Bhaṇḍa
> along with his city and the host of his sons.
> She it is who resides in the Śrīcakra.
>
> Him who performs auspicious deeds,
> Whose foot is curved,
> I worship. (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 129)[20]

Both these verses are from a stunning sequence of verses about the forms of Viṣṇu, in most of which Viṣṇu is put down by Śiva:

> When Viṣṇu had assumed the form of a fish
> and slain the demon who'd taken the Vedas
> down into the world of snakes,
>
> the gods were terrified to see him,
> big as a mighty mountain,
> put out the flames
> of the fire in the ocean
> with a blow of his tail.
>
> The chief gods praised Him,
> and as the Skull-bearer, Kapālin,
> He struck him down
> and put out his eyes.
> ... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 122)[21]

When Viṣṇu took on the excellent body of a turtle
he became terrifying, he swallowed the ocean;

his mouth was ablaze with flames like the *kālakūṭa* poison,
he shook the whole world in what he did;
he could not be conquered by Brahmā
nor any other god.

It was He who dragged him ashore
and made his limbs His necklace.

... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 123)[22]

When the earth was thrown in the sea
Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu assumed the form of a great pig,
quickly raised up the earth on his tusk
and slew the demon Hiraṇya in battle.

But when he carried on roaming about
and acting in a way offensive to all

Bhairava with His trident's sharp prongs
sending forth flames and ash
extracted his tusk
and wore it on His chest.

... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 124)[23]

All the gods trembled in fear of Viṣṇu
when he took on the body of the Man-lion,

so Brahmā sang His praises
and He took on the excellent body of Śarabha, the king of birds.

Speedily He cut him up with the tips of His claws
and adorned Himself with the skin,
illuminating the world with His fangs.

He who grants the wishes of all,
Whose foot is curved,
I worship. (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 125)[24]

Viṣṇu as the Dwarf, shrank his body
to make his petition in Bali's hall of sacrifice,
and made his body grow from earth to sky
and placed his foot – itself the triple world –
on the demon's crown.

But then he terrified the whole world with his roaring.
The hosts of gods praised Him as He slew the Dwarf
and ripped out his skeleton and tore off his skin.

... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 126)[25]

Rāma, lord of ascetics, son of Jāmadagni,
desiring to clear the sin of his mother's fault

and needing a mighty axe, excessively sharp,
to cut off the wings of the mountains –
the warriors who slew his father,

meditated constantly on this Dance of His
that is witnessed in every individual self.
Rāma gained his excellent wishes, long life and the others.
... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 131)[26]

Balarāma, Rohinī's son,
the fan-palm his insignia,
had his aged wife turned into a young woman
by the sacred ash obtained from His worship;

by much pilgrimage to His holy places
the misfortunes arising from the sin
of murdering the excellent ascetic
were allayed;

and by His grace
he cut up the wicked Pralamba
with his excellent mighty plough.
... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 132)[27]

At the end of every Kali age Viṣṇu Mukunda
in the form of Kalkin mounts his horse
and rides on earth,

slaying, with the sword he'd got from His pure mercy,
the host of heretics no bigger than a thumb,
so evil-minded and sinful are they by this time,
reforming the whole world to its proper condition.
... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 133)[28]

This list of *avatāras* either eliminated by Śiva or owing everything to him is followed up by a Tamilnadu horror story, supposed to have happened in Tiruvaiyāṟu, about ten miles from Tanjavur:

One of His devotees, an excellent Brahman,
in the middle of his pilgrimage
was eaten by multi-headed Mādhava Viṣṇu—

super-parrot-headed,
lion-, tiger-, horse-headed,
elephant-, bear-, eagle-headed,
monkey-headed,
man-headed—

and in this fury Viṣṇu went on,
threatening time and again all the worlds.

But in vain, for soon He slew him
and saved His devotee
and the whole universe too.

... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 134)[29]

The Pan–Indian tradition is surpassed by this cumulative nightmare form of Viṣṇu. Such power as Viṣṇu has, is, to put it mildly, unstable. Even when considered in his most permanent form, his most distinctive emblem, his discus, has its origin in Śiva:

In the beginning Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu
was constantly worshipping Paśupati
with a thousand flawless lotuses.

Once the last lotus could not be seen.
Then plucking out his own lotus eye
he placed it at His pure feet.

From Him he received his discus
and became splendid.
That Lord of Dancers, Whose foot is curved,
I worship. (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 56)[30]

Viṣṇu's discus is also mentioned when Umāpati refers to the Madurai cycle of myths. The Pāṇḍyas with their Madurai connections succeeded the Cōḻas, and this is marked in Cidambaram around the time of Umāpati by the construction of the small shrine dedicated to Mīnākṣī and Sundareśvara, south of the Śivakāmasundarī shrine on the western side of the temple site. Umāpati refers to the Madurai story of how Śiva assuaged the enormous hunger and thirst of the leader of his *gaṇas*. To allay Kuṇḍodara's thirst Śiva brings not only the milk ocean but all seven oceans. Umāpati also refers to Kuṇḍodara's theft of Viṣṇu's discus, so that Viṣṇu's weapon is marginalised as well as his milk ocean!

The king of the circle of *bhūtas*
Whose strength is famous
and who stole Viṣṇu's discus,

had the torment of his hunger and thirst absolved by Him
—a deed which made motionless the daughter of the Pāṇḍyan
—when He brought the seven oceans
joyfully in His own fingers
to accomplish His mother-in-law's wish;

... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 249)[31]

Another local myth, from Tiruvārūr, the next most eminent Śaiva temple in Cōḻa times, refers to Viṣṇu and the Milk Ocean, and Viṣṇu's

recitation of the *Mucukundasahasranāma*:

> To destroy the demons and protect the whole world
> Viṣṇu, Mura's foe, in the ocean of milk
> along with Lakṣmī
> performed difficult penance
> and with devotion worshipped in his heart
> the Lord with Ambikā beside Him.
>
> He obtained the excellent mantra
> that is the hymn called His Thousand Names
> and by reciting it
> became the Lord of the World.
>
> ... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 136)[32]

The tank at Tiruvārūr, considered to be biggest tank in South India, is called Kamalālaya, and Kamalā (Lakṣmī) is said to have been born from it, and there to have married Viṣṇu. Another important site, and where the *Lalitopākhyāna* mentioned above seems to have originated, is Kāñcīpuram. When discussing the *gopuras*, I mentioned above the possibility that the crowned drummer figure beside Ūrdhvatāṇḍava might be Viṣṇu. The following verse, and the *Kāñcīmāhātmya* passage on which it is based, justify that assertion.

> O Lotus Lakṣmī, don't let's play today
> I don't want my couch, the lord of snakes,
> nor Garuḍa.
>
> O Earth, do you come at once,
> for I am going to beat the drum
> in Tillavana with great skill
> to accompany the dance of the Foe of the Cities.
>
> So saying, in days of yore Hari went to His stage,
> Him who is unborn, Whose foot is curved,
> I worship. (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 230)[33]

The account of the *Kāñcīmahātmya* is as follows. One day as Viṣṇu was practising yoga, he noticed in his heart a flame in the middle of which Śiva was dancing. Overcome with wonder, he plunged into trance. Noticing this inert condition of Viṣṇu, his wife Lakṣmī, Garuḍa and Ananta, who were beside him, became anxious, without knowing exactly what had happened to their lord. After a few moments he awoke and sang of the magnificence of Śiva. Questioned by his wife, he told her that he had seen the Supreme Being (Śiva) dance in his heart and that his dance had fascinated him (151–66). His questioners begged him to allow them to see this dance. Viṣṇu brought them to Cidambaram and gave himself up to penance in respect of Śiva. Śiva appeared and said to him, "If your people desire to see my dance, first go with them to Kāñcī, where you will install and adore a *liṅga*.

Afterwards return here, then we will fulfill your vow"(167–175). Śiva thereupon went to Kāñcī, accompanied by all his entourage and installed a lingam in the south of Ekampam ... . Then he returned to Tillai (Cidambaram) (176–178). Śiva then began to dance. Lakṣmī, the king of birds (Garuḍa) and the king of serpents (Ādiśeṣa) saw him and meditated on him (179). The Gaṇas made use of musical instruments while he danced. Viṣṇu wished to do so too. He played the kettledrum. Afterwards he asked Śiva to grant him the boon of playing this instrument in all his dances (180–182).[34]

In the list of *avatāras* discussed above, Balarāma is present rather than Kṛṣṇa. What does Umāpati have to say of Kṛṣṇa? Kṛṣṇa is initiated in Śaiva worship by Upamanyu (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 53); at the *kalpa*'s end Kṛṣṇa, floating on a peepul leaf, thinks that there is no one but himself, but is then confronted by Bhairava with his trident (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 136). The distinctive name of Viṣṇu in Cidambaram, Govindarāja, is a problem that is not discussed in this paper; but the name Govinda is used twice by Umāpati in his poem. In *Kuñcitāṅghristava* 36 it is said of Śiva that his foot was sought by Govinda (*govindānveṣitāṅghri*), alluding both to Viṣṇu as Boar seeking the base of the *liṅga* and to Viṣṇu as Govindarāja as foremost devotee of Naṭarāja. In the other instance, earlier incarnations of Viṣṇu, waiting upon Śiva on Mount Kailāsa, see Kṛṣṇa coming to seek a boon for the gods:

> On the best of mountains,
> the lotus-eyed Viṣṇus,
> who had each in turn
> relinquished their authority,
>
> greeted Govinda,
> who had come to obtain the happiness of the gods,
> and after embracing him with their hands in delight,
> and asking how he was,
>
> they enlightened him as to Him:
> "Dear one, it's because you don't
> comprehend the Essence of Brahmā in your heart,
> that you ask for action –
> action is the cause of suffering!"
>
> ... (*Kuñcitāṅghristava* 215)[35]

We have now reviewed the principal references to Viṣṇu in Umāpati's poem. Clearly for this priest there was no question of Viṣṇu being equal to Śiva, any more than there was in the Cōḻa iconography of the temple. Viṣṇu was the foremost of devotees, who was happy to act as drummer for the Dance. On this internal evidence it is hard to imagine in those days a Viṣṇu shrine as substantial as we find today. With regard to the testimony of the two Āḻvārs, the mention of the "three thousand" priests, does, it is true, suggest a connection with the Naṭarāja temple, but it is no more

than a suggestion. The earliest Cōḻa art was fervently Śaiva, and it is unlikely that Āditya I countenanced a Vaiṣṇava presence in the centre of the holiest of Śaiva temples. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries afford strong evidence of Śiva's perceived superiority over Viṣṇu, and Pimenta's account at the end of the sixteenth century provides a spotlight on fervent opposition to the Viṣṇu shrine. There is no internal evidence that Appayya Dīkṣita's *Hariharastuti* applied specifically to Cidambaram. It seems likely that any theology built on the co–presence of the two deities in the first enclosure at Cidambaram and their equality or near-equality is only of very recent origin.

Notes

1. Natarajan, 1994, p. 165. The Govindarāja shrine has been the subject of considerable discussion. In addition to the work of Natarajan, Aruvamuthan and Sankaranarayanan (notes 2 and 4), see Krishnaswami Aiyangar, 1911; Mahalingam 1940; Ramakrishna Aiyer, 1946; Swamy, 1979.
2. Aruvamuthan, 1969, p. 81.
3. *Ibid.*, p.102.
4. Sankaranarayanan, 1988, p. 49.
5. For a brief general discussion of the Cidambaram temple, see my chapter "Chidambaram" in G. Michell (ed.), 1993, pp. 58–75.
6. *Tillai and Naṭarāja*, p. 179.
7. Part I Legends, History and Architecture by T. Satyamurthy; Part II Descriptions of Shrines by Somasekharendra Dikshitendra (translated by R. Sasikala) in Somasethu Dikshitar (ed.), 1987).
8. I am indebted to Friedhelm Hardy for this information.
9. I am grateful to Friedhelm Hardy for showing me his draft translation of this hymn.
10. *Tirukkōvaiyār*, trans. T. N. Ramacandram, 1989.
11. B. Natarajan refers to an inscription of Kulottuṅga II in Kanchi, which records provision made for the feeding of Śrīvaiṣṇavas by an officer of the king, and remarks that "this seems to take something of the sting off Kulottuṅga II". He continues, however, "this does not alter the position that there is a blot on the escutcheon" (*Tillai and Naṭarāja*, pp. 62f.).
12. *Cidambara Māhātmya*, ed. Somasekhara Dikshitar, 1971. It was written in the reign of Kulottuṅga I, according to Kulke, 1970; but see my comments on his dating in my *The Dance of Śiva*, Chapter 2.
13. *Kuñcitāṅghristava* of Umāpati Śivācārya, ed. with a Tamil translation and notes by K. M. Rājagaṇeśa Dīkṣita, 1958. I am preparing a new edition of this text with translation and commentary.
14. *yaddakṣe'dyāpi viṣṇur maṇimayasadane dakṣiṇe svāṅghriyugmaṃ*
kṛtvāsyaṃ cottarasyāṃ śaramukhaphaṇirāḍbhogatalpe śayānaḥ/
nityaṃ nidrāṃ prakurvann api hṛdi satataṃ yat padaṃ dhyāyatīdyaṃ
*devyā taṃ citsabheśaṃ sutagajavadanaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//*42*//*
15. Somasetu Dīkṣita in the Sanskrit introduction to his edition of the *Citsabheśotsavasūtra* lists the five principal shrines as 1. Naṭarāja, 2. Śivakāmyumāmbikā, 3. Śrīmulanātha, 4. Mahāgaṇapati, 5. Subrahmaṇya, called the ŚrīPāṇḍyanāyaka (p. 3 of unpaginated sequence).
16. Published in Ramesan, 1972, p. 160.
17. Purchas, 1905. pp. 208f.
18. *mohinyā śambhur ādāv atiniviḍavane dārukākhye caranyaḥ*
saundaryād vipradārān munigaṇam api taṃ māyayā mohayitvā/
vyarthīkṛtyābhicāraṃ dvijakulavihitaṃ sampradarśyātmanṛttaṃ
*viprāṃś cānvagrahīd yas tam api giriśayaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//*40*//*

19. *dvātriṃśadrāgabodhacyutamakuṭaśaśisvacchapiyūṣadhārā–*
saṃgāvāptasvajīvāmbujabhavavadanoddāmagītābhirāmam /
stabdhībhūtarṣinārīgaṇam adhivipinaṃ sarvaśṛṅgārarūpaṃ
yaṃ dṛṣṭvā viṣṇumāyā patimatim atanot kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham //130//

20. *viṣṇor aṃśāvatārān daśakaranakharair yuddharaṅge sṛjantī*
kāmeśālokanodyadgajavadanakaradhvastavighneśayantrā/
yasyāstreṇāśu bhaṇḍaṃ sasutagaṇapuraṃ nāśayām āsa daityam
devīśricakrasaṃsthā tam api śivakaraṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//129//

21. *pāṭhīnākārabhājaṃ phaṇibhuvanasamānītavedāsuraghnaṃ*
pucchāghātapraśāntāmbunidhiśikhiśikhaṃ parvatendrānukalpam/
viṣṇuṃ dṛṣṭvātibhītyā vibudhaparibṛdhaiḥ stūyamānaḥ kapālī
yas taṃ nighnan jahvāra dvinayanam api taṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//122//

22. *bhīmaṃ pītāmburāśiṃ kamaṭhavaratanuṃ kālakūṭopamāgni*
jvālāsandigdhavaktraṃ jagad api nikhilaṃ ksobhayantaṃ svakṛtyaiḥ/
brahmādyair apy ajayyaṃ harim adhivasudhaṃ karṣayan yas tadīyān
aṅgān kaṇṭhe dadhau taṃ nikhilasuranutaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//123//

23. *potrīrūpaṃ mahāntṃ jaladhigatadharāṃ daṃṣṭrayoddhṛtya vegāt*
yuddhe hatvā hiraṇyaṃ suraripum akhilāniṣṭakṛtyaiś carantam/
vaikuṇṭhaṃ bhairavo yaś śitaśikhavigaladvahnikīlāsaśūla-
proktaṃ kṛtvā tadīyaṃ radam urasi dadhau kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//124//

24. *bhītyā santrāsamāne naraharivapuṣo devatānāṃ samūhe*
dhātrā saṃstūyamānaḥ śarabhavaratanuḥ sāluvaḥ pakṣirājaḥ/
vegāt taṃ chedayitvā svapadanakhamukhais tattvacālaṅkṛto'bhūd
daṃṣṭrāsaṃdīptalokas tam akhilavaradaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//125//

25. *yācñākharvīkṛtāṅgaṃ balimakhasadasi svāṃ tanūṃ vardhayitvā*
dyāv ābhūmisurārer makuṭam api padām ānayitvā trilokīm/
huṅkārād bhīṣayantaṃ suragaṇavinuto vāmanaṃ yo vinighnan
kaṅkālaṃ tasya dehatvacam api hṛtavān kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//127//

26. *mātṛdrohāghaśāntiṃ svapitṛnidhanakṛtkṣatraśailendrapakṣa–*
dvandvacchedātitīkṣṇaprabalaparaśum apy āptukāmo munīndraḥ/
nṛttaṃ yasyedam ātmany anugatam asakṛd bhāvayan jāmadagnyo
rāmo lebhe cirāyuḥpramukhavaravarān kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//131//

27. *yatpūjālabdhabhūtiprabhavitayuvatībhāvavṛddhasvajāyo*
yatkṣetrānekasevāśamitamunivaradhvaṃsanāgovikāraḥ/
tālāṅko rauhiṇeyaḥ prabalahalavarākṛṣṭaduṣṭapralambo
jāto yasya prasādād amṛtakaradharaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//132//

28. *āruhyāśvaṃ mukundaḥ pratikalivigamaṃ kalkirūpīpṛthivyāṃ*
gacchan pāṣaṇḍavargaṃ kumatimaghayutaṃ tatra tatraiva saṃsthaṃ/
aṅguṣṭhākārabhājaṃ yadamalakaruṇāvāptakhaḍgena nighnan
sarvāṃ bhūmiṃ yathāvat kalayati tam ajaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//133//

29. *madhye mārgaṃ svabhaktaṃ dvijavarajanuṣaṃ gaṇḍabheruṇḍasiṃha–*
vyāghrāśvebharkṣatārkṣyaplavaganaramukhe mādhave bhakṣayitvā/
krodhād brahmāṇḍavargaṃ muhur api ca mudhā tarjayaty āśu taṃ yaḥ
hatvā rakṣat svabhaktaṃ jagad api sakalaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//134//

30. *vaikuṇṭho nityam ādau paśupatim anaghaiḥ puṇḍarīkais sahasre-*
ṇārcāṃ kurvan kadācin na caramakamalaṃ dṛṣṭam āsīt tad eva/
utpāṭya svākṣipadmaṃ yadamalapadayor arpayitvātha yasmāt
cakraṃ samprāpya reje tam api naṭapatiṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//5//

31. *viṣṇoś cakrāpahartuḥ prathitabalajuṣo bhūtacakrādhipasya*
kṣuttṛṭduḥkhapraśānti pradanijacaritastabdhapāṇḍyātmajātam/
śvaśruvāñchābhipūrtyai nijadhuri ca mudā''nītasaptāmburāśiṃ
bhaktastrīpakvapiṣṭāśanarucimuditaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//249//

32. *daityānāṃ dhvaṃsanārthaṃ sakalam api jagadrakṣaṇārthaṃ murāriḥ*
lakṣmyā kṣīrāmburāśau kṛtakaṭhinatapās sāmbamūrtiṃ prabhuṃ yam/
bhaktyā saṃpūjya citte manuvaram api yannāmasāhasrasaṃjñaṃ
stotraṃ labdhvā japans tatprabhur abhavad ajaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃbhaje'ham//136//

33. *padme māstv adya līlā phaṇipatiśayanaṃ vainateyo 'pi nālaṃ*
bhūmi tvaṃ śīghram āyāhyaham api naṭane tillavanyāṃ purāreḥ/

hastābhyāṃ vādayiṣyāmyahaha caṭutaraṃ maddalaṃ [read *mardalaṃ*] *cetyudīrya prāyād yadraṅgam ādau harir api tam ajaṃ kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//*230//

34. Dessigane, Pattabiramin and Filliozat, 1964. pp. 86f.

35. *tyaktasvasvādhikārāḥ sarasijanayanāś cāgataṃ devasaukhya–prāptyai govindam uktvā kuśalam api karāśleṣapūrvaṃ pramodāt/ vatsa tvaṃ brahmatattvaṃ hṛdi na vikalayan prārthyase duḥkhahetuṃ karmetyudbodhayanto yam api girivare kuñcitāṅghriṃ bhaje'ham//*215//

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Mañjuśrī and 'The Chanting of Names' (*Nāmasaṃgīti*): Wisdom and its Embodiment in an Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist text

Anthony Tribe

Introduction

Among the bodhisattvas who play such a central role in the literature of Mahāyāna Buddhism the figure of Mañjuśrī is one of the most prominent. The bodhisattva pre-eminently associated with wisdom, and functioning as the major interlocutor in many sūtras, he is also depicted as a spiritual friend *(kalyāṇamitra)*, a convertor of beings to the Buddhist Dharma, and an object of devotion and meditation.[1] His origins are obscure: unlike Vajrapāṇi, for example, he does not appear in non-Mahāyāna literature, though Marcelle Lalou has suggested the *gandharva* Pañcaśikha as a possible antecedent.[2]

Mañjuśrī usually has the status of a tenth stage (*bhūmi*) bodhisattva. However, in some texts he is said to be a fully enlightened Buddha.[3] Of these, perhaps the most important and influential is a short work called the *Nāmasaṃgīti*, 'The Chanting of Names' (hereafter NS). Also known as the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, it has been translated into English twice, once by Ronald Davidson and once by Alex Wayman.[4] The first modern scholarly edition of the Sanskrit text was published by I. P. Minaev in 1887 along with his edition of the *Mahāvyutpatti*, the Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary.[5]

The NS appears to depict Mañjuśrī not only as a Buddha but also as the Primordial Buddha (*ādibuddha*) and to portray him not simply in terms of an embodiment of wisdom – whether that of a bodhisattva, Buddha or the Ādibuddha – but as that wisdom itself. This description of Mañjuśrī's depiction in the NS is couched in tentative terms since there are a number

of puzzling features about the NS's structure and contents that raise questions about whether the 'Names' of the NS's title are indeed those of Mañjuśrī, one of these being the fact that in the main text he is only once referred to directly.

The primary aim of this paper is to give some account of the nature of Mañjuśrī's depiction with respect to wisdom and its embodiment in the NS. A secondary aim is to look at how this depiction is translated into ritual terms in Vilāsavajra's commentary on the NS, the *Nāmamantrārthāvalokinī*, "An Explanation of the Meaning of the Name-mantras" (hereafter NMAA). Vilāsavajra was one of the first Indian commentators on the NS, probably writing in the latter part of the 8th century CE,[6] and his commentary interprets the NS within a sophisticated and complex ritual framework. A further reason for considering Vilāsavajra's work is that it can cast light on the mutual interaction between ritual and doctrine: on the one hand ritual structures can encode or reflect doctrinal stances; on the other, to accomodate them into particular ritual structures, doctrinal categories may be modified. Satisfactory pursuit of these aims requires the consideration of some of the difficulties concerning the NS's structure and contents and in general I have tried to come to conclusions about these by looking at the NS itself rather than by approaching them though Vilāsavajra's commentary. Often, however, Vilāsavajra confirms a conclusion implied by independent examination of the NS. In order to avoid confusion I will refer to the 'names' of the NS as 'Names', i.e. capitalising the initial letter. This is particularly appropriate since most of the Names are not names as generally understood and also allows statements such as "most of the Names are not names" to make sense.

Since the context of the NS is essentially tantric and since it was classified by the Tibetan tradition as a tantra it could be considered provocative, if not perverse, to describe it as a Mahāyāna text, as in this paper's title. Would it not be better described as a Vajrayāna work given that 'Vajrayāna' is the term most commonly used for tantric Buddhism? This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the relationship between the expressions Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, but a general reason for adopting the former in relation to the NS is that the Vajrayāna is often perceived as being subsumed within the Mahāyāna rather than being opposed to or subsuming it.[7] More specifically, the NS does not contain a single instance of the term Vajrayāna, employing instead the expression *mantranaya*, "the Way of Mantras". Thus, it refers to Mañjuśrī (let us assume for the present) as, "born from the great Way of Mantras, having the great Way of Mantras as his nature".[8] An alternative and synonymous term, *mantramukha*, is also found so that, for instance, the NS describes itself as, "the quick [means of] success for bodhisattvas observing the practices of the Way of Mantras (*mantramukha*)".[9] This quotation suggests that the NS sees the Way of Mantras as a particularly effective method of practice

employed within the Mahāyāna rather than as something that confronts or supersedes it. The NS also contains a description of the results of such practice, given in traditional Mahāyānist terms:

> O Vajrapāṇi, O Vajradhara, before very long, the best of men, the one who preserves the *Nāmasaṃgīti* of ultimate meaning and who has properly collected the Provisions of Merit and Knowledge, will soon acquire [all] Buddha-qualities and fully awaken to unsurpassed perfect enlightenment.[10]

The *Nāmasaṃgīti*

Structure

The NS is a short work. It consists of 162 verses in *anuṣṭubh* metre followed by a prose section praising the NS and describing the benefits of reciting it (*anuśaṃsā*). There follows a short section containing mantras (*mantravinyāsa*), and five concluding verses (*upasaṃhāra*). The first 25 verses act as an introduction to the main part of the text. They give it the appearance of a tantra: Vajradhara accompanied by a retinue of fierce Vajrapāṇi-s asks the Buddha Śākyamuni to teach the NS. Śākyamuni replies and, being pleased with Vajradhara's words, agrees to his request. The core verses (NS 26–162) consist primarily of a series of predicates in the nominative case and are a list of figures, attributes, qualities, actions and categories understandable as embodying wisdom. These are the Names of the NS. The concluding verses depict Vajradhara and his retinue rejoicing in what they have heard and further praising the NS.[11] (Table 1, overleaf, summarises the NS's structure.)

Ronald Davidson argues that the opening and closing verses along with the *anuśaṃsā*, *mantravinyāsa* and colophon probably represent a later stratum in the development of the text. In other words, the core text (NS 26–162) constitutes the initial form of the NS. Davidson sees this as representing "a basic meditative form complete with devotional homage in the final five verses" and as being "the instructions of a *vajrācārya*".[12] Both these statements are rather puzzling given the nature of the core verses. Being largely composed of a list of predicates, they contain no instructions as such. The manner in which these verses are "a basic meditative form" is also not immediately obvious, unless Davidson has in mind their potential for recitation, which is made explicit by the frame text. The early commentators on the NS certainly developed visualisation texts that employed the verses in various ways,[13] but these are secondary and exegetical works and do not indicate anything characteristic of the core text itself. Nonetheless, the core text does possess a unity of style and organisation of content that separate it from the rest of the work.

The NS:	Structure	Divisions in some NS Manuscripts
Frame Text:	Opening Verses:	
(1–25)	a) Vajradhara's request (1–16)	Adhyeṣaṇā (1–16)
	b) Śākyamuni's reply (17–22)	Prativacana (17–22)
	c) Introduction to core text (23–25)	Ṣaṭkulāvalokana (23–24)
		Māyājālābhisaṃbodhikrama (25–27)
Core Text:	a) Initial gāthā & homage (26–27)	
(26–162)		Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala (28–41)
		Suviśuddhadharmadhātujñāna (42–66c)
	b) The Names (28–157)	Ādarśajñāna (66d–76)
		Pratyavekṣaṇājñāna (77–118)
		Samatājñāna (119–142)
		Kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna (143–157)
	c) Homage (158–162)	Pañcatathāgatajñānastuti (158–162)
Frame Text:	Concluding Sections:	
	a) Praise & Benefits of the NS	Anuśaṃsā (in 6 parts)
	b) Mantras	Mantravinyāsa
	c) Concluding verses (163–167)	Upasaṃhāra (163–167)
	d) Colophon	

Table 1. The Structure of the *Nāmasaṃgīti* (verse nos. in parentheses).

Indian NS commentators tended to see verses 1–162 as the basic text. Vilāsavajra gives 162 as the figure for the total number of verses, stating that the remaining text is equivalent to 150 verses.[14] This view that the later parts of the NS (*anuśaṃsā*, *mantravinyāsa* and *upasaṃhāra*) are different from what goes before is also found in Mañjuśrīmitra's *Upadeśa* for the recitation of the NS.[15] When the NS is chanted in present-day Nepal, the whole text, including the colophon, but excepting the *anuśaṃsā*, is used.[16] Despite the existence of these text divisions, caution is needed before concluding that they represent different strata of textual composition.[17] Evidence from the analysis of the content of the NS should be taken into account before drawing any definite conclusions.

Influence of the *Nāmasaṃgīti*.

If the testimony of the very large number of NS related works preserved in the Tibetan Tanjur – 129 in total – is anything to go by, the NS exerted a particularly strong influence on the imagination of the Indian Buddhist tradition, especially in its tantric form, for a period of three hundred years or more from the middle of the 8th century onwards. The works in Tibetan

translation range from lengthy commentaries to shorter *sādhana* texts and ritual works covering many aspects of tantric and non-tantric Mahāyāna practice.

One reason for its enduring influence may lie in the fact that the NS does not explicitly promote any one philosophical position, whether Madhyamaka, Yogācāra or Tathāgatagarbha. Thus the series of descriptions of the qualities, attributes and embodiments of the enlightened state of which the verses are composed are amenable to a wide range of interpretation, as well as being eminently suitable for liturgical and devotional use. The tantric content of the NS most obviously belongs to the phase of Buddhist Tantra known as Yogatantra,[18] where Mahāvairocana is envisaged as the central embodiment of enlightenment. However, there is no systematic development of this tantric material and as a result the NS could be placed within different tantric contexts without too much strain.

Among the earliest commentators on the NS are Mañjuśrīmitra, Vilāsavajra and Vimalamitra, who can with varying degrees of caution be placed in the middle to late eighth century, giving a *terminus ad quem* for the NS. An estimate of the *terminus a quo* for such works is always a difficult matter: Davidson suggests a date of composition of perhaps fifty years before the earliest commentary.[19] Vilāsavajra's commentary, the NMAA, survives in Sanskrit in a number of Nepalese manuscripts. It is a fairly long work – equivalent to approximately 3,000 *anuṣṭubh* stanzas – which sets the NS within a primarily Yogatantra context.[20] It is an important text, not only because it contains a wealth of citations from both tantric and non-tantric sources but also for the reason that it is probably the earliest Buddhist tantric exegetical work to survive in its original language. The NMAA was translated into Tibetan (Tōh. 2533) in the early 11th century by Smṛtijñānakīrti who himself wrote a NS commentary (Tōh. 2538), following the tradition of interpretation initiated by Vilāsavajra.

Whereas the early commentators interpreted the NS as a Yogatantra later writers tended to link it either to the *Kālacakratantra* or to the Yoginītantras.[21] Of the later commentators, Mañjuśrīkīrti, in the early 10th century, wrote the last long Yogatantra commentary (Tōh. 2534)[22] and Kālacakrapāda, the traditional founder of the Indian *Kālacakra* cycle, commented on the *anuśaṃsā* (Tōh. 1399). Nāropa, the latter's pupil and the teacher of Marpa, related the NS to the *Kālacakra* system in his commentary on the consecration (*abhiṣeka*) chapter of the *Kālacakratantra*, the *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*.[23] An important commentary written from the *Kālacakra* perspective is the *Amṛtakaṇikā* of Raviśrījñāna (Tōh. 1395). This work, its subcommentary, the *Amṛtakaṇikoddyotana* of Vibhūticandra, the NMAA and a commentary of unknown authorship, the *Gūḍhapadā*, are the only NS works known to survive in the original Sanskrit.[24]

One of the last Indian writers of significance on the NS was Advayavajra, who probably lived in the late 10th to early 11th centuries. The Tanjur

contains nine works by him which place the NS within the framework of the Yoginītantras. Advayavajra also promoted the NS in lay-Buddhist circles. In the *Kudṛṣṭinirghātanam*, "The refutation of Wrong Views", recital of the NS is enumerated as part of daily ritual for householder bodhisattvas.[25] A number of other well known figures also wrote commentaries on the NS including Ḍombīheruka (Tōh. 2542), Anupamarakṣita (Tōh. 1396), and the tantric Candragomin (Tōh. 2090).

An episode from the (legendary) life of Candragomin that involves the NS is related by the Tibetan historians Bu-ston and Tāranātha. The episode is part of the story of Candragomin's visit to Nālandā and his challenging the famous Mādhyamika philosopher Candrakīrti to debate. According to Tāranātha's account, on his arrival at Nālandā, Candragomin sees Candrakīrti preaching outside the boundary walls of the university and stands nearby listening to him. Candrakīrti, wondering whether Candragomin is an opponent wanting to debate, asks him where he comes from and what subjects he knows. To the latter question Candragomin replies, "I know the grammar of Pāṇini, the hymn of praise in 150 verses, and the *Nāmasaṃgīti*." The account continues,

> Thus, though in words he did not express pride insofar as he said that he knew nothing beyond these three treatises, by implication he claimed that he knew all about grammar, sūtra, and tantra.[26]

Despite its conflation of Candragomin the grammarian with the tantric Candragomin the story indicates the special status given to the NS.

The NS was translated into Tibetan by the great 11th century Tibetan translator Rin-chen bzang-po and extensively revised in the late 13th century by bLo-gros brtan-pa. However, an earlier translation than Rin-chen bzang-po's must have been made since the NS is mentioned in the lDan-dkar catalogue of Buddhist texts, which probably reached its presesnt form in the early 9th century CE,[27] and there are also NS manuscripts from Dun-huang.[28]

In Nepal, where Mañjuśrī is the legendary creator of the Kathmandu valley, and where the Dharmadhātuvāgīśvaramaṇḍala of Mañjughoṣa is inscribed in metal on a raised plinth in front of many temples and *stūpas*, the NS is still chanted in Sanskrit as part of the daily morning ritual in some of the *bāhāḥs* (Skt. *vihāra*).

Mañjuśrī in the *Nāmasaṃgīti*

Mañjuśrī as *Mañjuśrījñānasattva*

Looking at how Mañjuśrī is described in the frame text provides a point of departure for examining his portrayal in the NS. In the opening verses,

Vajradhara refers to "the *Nāmasaṃgīti* ... of the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī (*mañjuśrījñānasattva*)"[29] and characterises this figure as "the Knowledge-Body" (*jñānakāya*), "the Lord of Speech" (*gīṣpati*), "the Embodiment of Knowledge" (*jñānamūrti*), and "the Self-existing One" (*svayaṃbhū*).[30]

Significantly, the figure so described is not Mañjuśrī as such, but "the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī". This same expression is used on four other occasions: three times in the prose *anuśaṃsā* section and once in the colophon. In three of these the context is a similar description of the NS as being that of the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī.[31] The remaining instance (one of those in the *anuśaṃsā* section) is that of a recommendation to meditate on his form.[32]

The word 'Mañjuśrī' is used just once more in the frame text, again in a compounded form. In the opening verses Śākyamuni, replying to Vajradhara, refers to Mañjuśrī as "the Knowledge-Body Mañjuśrī" (*mañjuśrījñānakāya*).[33] The connection between the two titles, "the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī" and "the Knowledge-Body Mañjuśrī" is clarified in the following phrase, found on two occasions in the *anuśaṃsā*: "... the *Nāmasaṃgīti* of the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī who is the Knowledge-Body (*jñānakāya*) of all the Tathāgatas."[34] If the term *jñānakāya* is construed as a *karmadhāraya* compound, ie. if it means "the body [or collection] that is Knowledge", then to say that Mañjuśrī is the *jñānakāya* of all the Tathāgatas is to say that he is the Knowledge that underlies or lies within all Tathāgatas.[35]

This description of Mañjuśrī as the Knowledge-Body of all the Tathāgatas parallels that of the Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) as the mother of the Buddhas as seen, for example, in chapter 12 of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Here, the metaphor of 'mother' is used in the sense of the 'source' of the enlightenment that makes one a Buddha. In a similar vein the NS describes Mañjuśrī as "the progenitor of all the Buddhas".[36] As a bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī is often portrayed as a son of the Buddhas – which is how the very next *pāda* describes him: as "the best, supreme son of the Buddhas"[37] – but as the Knowledge-Body he is their progenitor. This use of the metaphors of 'mother' and 'progenitor', despite differences of nuance, conveys the sense that Buddhahood has a prior condition, whether this is formulated as *prajñā* or *jñāna*. Under the influence of the Tantra, the Perfection of Wisdom becomes Prajñāpāramitā, a deity embodying Wisdom; whereas Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of Wisdom, undergoes a contrary transformation to become *jñāna*, the Knowledge he embodies.

The Mañjuśrī who is the Knowledge-Body of all the Tathāgatas is not simply Mañjuśrī but Mañjuśrījñānasattva. Like the term *jñānakāya*, *jñānasattva* is best understood as a *karmadhāraya*; ie. "Knowledge-Being" should be analysed as meaning "a Being that is Knowledge". This analysis of *jñānasattva* as referring to something that is both 'knowledge' and 'a being' makes it easier to see how the term sometimes denotes pure wisdom

(e.g. as "the Knowledge-Body") and sometimes its embodiment (e.g. as "the Embodiment of Knowledge" and, indeed, the NS Names).

The discussion of the word 'Mañjuśrījñānasattva' in the NMAA is also pertinent:

> He [ie. Mañjuśrī] is called a 'Knowledge-Being' since he dwells in the heart of all the Tathāgatas. The Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī is not the bodhisattva who is the master of the Ten Stages (*bhūmi*). Rather, he is Non-dual Awareness (*advayajñāna*), the Perfection of Wisdom itself. For this very reason Dignāga says, "The Tathāgata is the Perfection of Wisdom, that is to say, Non-dual Awareness".[38]

Vilāsavajra here spells out that the Mañjuśrī who is the Knowledge-Body of the Tathāgatas (as described in the *anuśaṃsā*) cannot be the same as the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Whether his further identification of the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī with *advayajñāna* is supported by the text of the NS is a question that will have to be deferred for the present.

Within the literature of tantric visualisation (*sādhana*) the expression 'Knowledge-Being' (*jñānasattva*) is familiarly paired with the term 'Pledge-Being' (*samayasattva*). This is a more technical usage, *jñānasattva* here representing the real nature of the deity or deities visualised by the practitioner. In the mechanics of the *sādhana* the Knowledge-Being and Pledge-Being are usually imagined as separate deities (or sets of deities), the latter being the designation for the form that the mantrin initially evokes and identifies with. At the moment the Knowledge-Being is visualised as merging with the practitioner-as-Pledge-Being the practitioner is, in the terms of the ritual, fully enlightened.[39]

Neither the NS nor Vilāsavajra's commentary refer to this distinction between *jñānasattva* and *samayasattva*. Nonetheless, their use of the term *jñānasattva* is not unconnected with its function when paired with *samayasattva*. Just as, in the latter context, the *jñānasattva* is depicted as the defining and enlightened aspect of a deity, Mañjuśrījñānasattva is portrayed as the *jñāna* that makes Buddhas what they are and without which they would be mere (unenlightened) forms. He is, as the NS *anuśaṃsā* repeats twice, in the hearts of all Tathāgatas.

There is, however, an important difference between how *jñānasattva* functions in the two contexts. For the meditator who has invoked and merged the *jñānasattva* with the *samayasattva*, the term *jñānasattva* can denote a wide variety of deities, depending on the particular *sādhana* involved. In the NS the implication is that Mañjuśrī is *the* Knowledge-Being, thereby underlying all deities and form of wisdom. Whether the distinction between *jñānasattva* and *samayasattva* had evolved at the time of NS or Vilāsavajra's commentary is uncertain. If it had not, it may be that the use of the term *jñānasattva* in the NS and its early Yogatantra commentaries contributed to its development. Vilāsavajra translates the notion of

Mañjuśrījñānasattva being in the heart of the Tathāgatas into visual and ritual terms in his NS *sādhana* in a manner that could easily pave the way for such an evolution.[40]

The 'Names' in the "Chanting of Names"

Having examined Mañjuśrī's depiction in the frame text, there remains the issue of whether and, if so, how Mañjuśrī is portrayed in the core text. The bulk of the core text (130 of 137 verses) consist of the Names of the NS, in the form of a series of predicates whose subject is never clearly stated. An important question, therefore, is whether Mañjuśrī is the unstated subject. Do the Names name Mañjuśrī or some other figure? The depiction of the NS in the frame text as being that of, or associated with, Mañjuśrījñānasattva leaves open the possibility that although the text is in a sense *his* – e.g. it could have been composed or spoken by him – the Names could be those of some other figure or object. Finally, if the Names do name Mañjuśrī, do they name him as a bodhisattva or as Mañjuśrījñānasattva? The question of whom (or what) the Names name needs to be addressed before the nature of Mañjuśrī's depiction in the core text can be pursued any further.

The title of the NS appears to make it obvious that it is Mañjuśrī's names that are being recited. Both Davidson and Wayman give *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* as the title of the work they are translating. However, this title is not given to it anywhere in the text itself or in its colophon. Moreover, the compound *mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* is ambiguous. It can be analysed either as 'The Name-Chanting of Mañjuśrī' or, rather differently, as 'The Chanting of Mañjuśrī's Names'. Davidson, whether intentionally or not, retained that ambiguity when he translated it as "The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī".[41] Wayman opted for the unambiguous "Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī".

Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti is in fact given as a title for the NS in a number of (mainly later) Indian commentaries and other secondary NS works,[42] so its use as a title is not without precedent. An examination of the titles used in the NS itself may clarify how the title *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* should be understood. As has been noted, the NS calls itself the *Nāmasaṃgīti* in the frame text. The longer title, *Mañjuśrījñānasattvasya Paramārthā Nāmasaṃgītiḥ*, "The Supreme Name-Chanting of Mañjuśrījñānasattva" occurs in the colophon. This description of the text is confirmed in both the opening verses (NS 10–11) and in the *anuśaṃsā*. Thus, though the Name-Chanting, ie. the text as a whole, is said to be Mañjuśrī's, at no point are the actual Names said to be his. On this basis the title *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* is best read as 'The Name-Chanting of Mañjuśrī', not as 'The Chanting of Mañjuśrī's Names'. It is, nonetheless, understandable how the title *Mañjuśrījñānasattvasya Paramārthā Nāmasaṃgītiḥ* could be shortened to *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* and used, perhaps in preference to *Nāmasaṃgīti*, in order to preserve the connection with Mañjuśrī.[43]

This analysis of the title is the one followed in the NMAA. To describe the genitive relation between the NS and Mañjuśrījñānasattva Vilāsavajra uses the term *saṃbandha*, meaning 'connection' or 'association', so that 'the NS of Mañjuśrījñānasattva' is to be understood as 'the NS associated with, or related to, Mañjuśrījñānasattva'.[44]

The question of whom or what the Names of the NS name thus remains unanswered. There may be some help in the two somewhat obscure but crucial verses that open the core text:

> A Ā I Ī U Ū E AI O AU AṂ AḤ. I, the Awakened One, the Embodiment of Knowledge, am in the heart of the Buddhas of the three times. OṂ – Obeisance to you, Diamond-Sharp, Destroyer of Suffering, Embodiment of the Knowledge of Wisdom, Knowledge-Body, Lord of Speech, Arapacana. (NS 26–27)[45]

Of present concern – leaving aside for the time being consideration of what these verses might mean – is the question of the identity of the speaker who, after the enumeration of twelve vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet, declares "I, the Awakened One, the Embodiment of Knowledge ...". An answer is provided by the three verses that precede these two. The three form one sentence and immediately follow Vajradhara's request to hear the NS and Śākyamuni's subsequent assent. The verses, in abbreviated form, read as follows:

> Then Śākyamuni, the Fortunate One, having surveyed the great entire family of mantras ... spoke this verse connected with the Lord of Speech, which is endowed with six kingly mantras, which has the Non-dual as its source, [and] which has the characteristic of non-origination. (NS 23–5)[46]

So, the verse starting with the 12 vowels is that of the 'Lord of Speech' (*girāṃ pateḥ*), a common epithet for Mañjuśrī. As a result, although it is Śākyamuni who is speaking, it is the verse of Mañjuśrī that he speaks. In other words the 'I' of "I, the Awakened One ... am in the heart of the Buddhas of the three times" is Mañjuśrī. The NMAA also takes this view, specifically identifying the 'Lord of Speech' of NS 25 with Mañjuśrījñānasattva.[47]

Following Mañjuśrī's declaration is the verse of homage, "OṂ – Obeisance to you, Diamond-Sharp ...". Usually taken to be the "six kingly mantras", as described in NS 25, it could be interpreted as a homage to six different forms of Mañjuśrī. If so, it is a homage to the subject of the previous verse. However, it is not clear who is uttering this verse. Is Śākyamuni continuing to report a self-homage spoken by Mañjuśrī in, say, the form of Mañjuśrījñānasattva? Is Śākyamuni speaking his own words? Or is there some other alternative?[48] After these two verses, the remaining 135 verses of the core text follow (NS 28–162). With the exception of the final five verses of homage (NS 158–162) they can all

be read as a series of predicates (the Names), often a separate one for each quarter verse.[49]

The relation of these remaining 135 verses to the two that precede them is also not completely clear. The first, NS 28, starts with the phrase *tad yathā* ('accordingly', 'that is to say'), normally used before an expansion or elaboration of a preceding item or statement. If it is taken to govern the rest of the verses of the core text,[50] then they can be understood as an elaboration of NS 26–7, and therefore the subject of the predicates or Names is the 'I' of "I, the Awakened One ... am in the heart of the Buddhas of the three times", namely the Lord of Speech, Mañjuśrī.

This means that the Names of the NS are, despite the previous analysis of the title, names of Mañjuśrī. Arriving at this conclusion has involved a number of arguments and assumptions concerning the relationship between various parts of the text. If NS 26–162 did start off as an independent text then the identity of the unstated subject of the predicates or Names cannot be ascertained. What can be said is that the subject has to be masculine in gender and function as something or someone that underlies the whole range of Buddhist exemplars of realised wisdom in much the way as Mañjuśrījñānasattva is envisaged as doing in the frame text.

The earliest commentators knew the text as we have it, with the introductory verses and the concluding sections. So far as is known, it was never commented on other than as a whole.[51] For the present, I will treat the text as of a piece and allow the predicates of the core text to count as evidence in the investigation of Mañjuśrī's portrayal in the NS. In any case, the portrayal of Mañjuśrī in the frame text is consonant with what could be said of the putative subject of the core verses taken in isolation.

Nonetheless, there is also a sense in which the Names are *not* names of Mañjuśrī, and this has to do with the question of what sort of thing the Names are. They are not a straightforward list of epithets and attributes that could be ascribed to Mañjuśrī as a bodhisattva or even as a Buddha. For instance, they include a number of proper names of different figures, such as Samantabhadra (NS 115), Vairocana (NS 62) and Vajrasattva (NS 71). Samantabhadra or Vajrasattva are not, and cannot be, alternative names of Mañjuśrī; he has to be seen, rather, as their identity, as what ultimately underlies their nature. From this perspective, the Names are names of the forms in which Mañjuśrī as Knowledge-Being, i.e. as *jñāna*, can appear. As such they could, and do, range from Buddhas to doctrinal categories. They could be described as being Mañjuśrījñānasattva as he appears at the level of conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*). In summary, the Lord of Speech who declares himself to be in the heart of the Buddhas of the three times and who can be taken as the subject of the Names is Mañjuśrī, but Mañjuśrī the Knowledge-Being rather than the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

The NMAA broadly confirms this picture. It states that the NS Names are both supramundane and mundane, and denote two things, firstly, "the

Yoga, Kriyā and Caryā Tantras, the different categories of sacred utterance (*pravacana*), the sūtras, the Abhidharma and the Vinaya"; and secondly, "all things moving and unmoving".[52] Given that these two cover all objects of experience, Vilāsavajra has perhaps gone beyond what the text justifies. The inclusion of all mundane objects almost certainly reflects Vilāsavajra's Yogācāra perspective, namely that all objects of experience result from an erroneous partition of Non-dual Awareness (*advayajñāna*) which, we should remember, Vilāsavajra has identified with Mañjuśrījñānasattva. So, if everything is, ultimately, Non-dual Awareness then everything is, ultimately, the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī. But the Names are chanted, adds Vilāsavajra, at the level of conventional truth. This, he says, is, "in accordance with the principle that all this is mere names until [one has reached] the upper limit of existence".[53] It is not until his commentary on the fifth section of the NS, however, that Vilāsavajra clearly states that the Names are to be understood as qualifying Mañjuśrī the Knowledge-Being.[54]

The fact that the term *jñānasattva* is not found as one of the Names further suggests that the NS takes Mañjuśrījñānasattva as the figure that is 'Named'. However, as noted earlier, 'Mañjuśrī' *is* found once as a Name. The only uncompounded occurrence of the word in the whole text, the name (and Name) is found in NS 157, the very last verse before the five verses of homage that complete the core text of the NS. Its final two *pādas* read, "The glorious one, producing every success; Mañjuśrī, the best of the glorious".[55] This Naming of Mañjuśrī as Mañjuśrī makes sense if it is the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī, as Non-dual Awareness, that is being Named, or embodied, as the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.[56]

Mañjuśrī in the Core Text of the NS

This understanding of the Names, however, means that any and every Name is relevant to an account of Mañjuśrī's portrayal in the NS. Given the possible scope of discussion, it is only possible in the present article to sketch a few of the more important emphases found in the NS in relation to how Mañjuśrī is depicted as wisdom and its embodiment.[57] It should be borne in mind in what follows that when it is stated that Mañjuśrī is called or identified as something or other in a verse containing the Names the identification is never explicit and that the name Mañjuśrī should be understood to refer to the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī rather than the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, unless otherwise stated.

Earlier it was noted that Vilāsavajra identified Mañjuśrījñānasattva as Non-dual Awareness (*advayajñāna*) and the question was raised as to whether this could be supported by the text of the NS. Such an identification is made in NS 99b, where Mañjuśrī is said to be "Awareness that has Non-duality as its nature".[58] Elsewhere he is simply described as 'Non-dual' (*advaya*).[59]

Although *advaya* is not a word that is used extensively in the NS it has a significant role. NS 26, the verse that opens the core text by enumerating

the twelve vowels, is described in the previous verse as having its source in the Non-dual (*advayodayām*),[60] and the *anuśaṃsā* describes the NS as having Non-duality as its ultimate meaning.[61] Use of the term does slant the NS towards the Yogācāra, though other more familiar or technical Yogācāra terms are not present. Thus, Mañjuśrī is not described, as one might expect, as free from the duality of object and subject (*grāhyagrāhaka*) and there is no mention of the three natures or aspects (*trisvabhāva*).

The presence and significance of the term 'Knowledge-Body' (*jñānakāya*) as an epithet for Mañjuśrījñānasattva in the frame text has already been discussed. In the core text it is used three times, in NS 27, 162 and 114. The term is in the vocative case in the first two instances; firstly, in the verse of the "six kingly mantras" (NS 27) and, secondly, in the last of the five homage verses closing the core text (NS 162).[62] In NS 114 it occurs, as part of a Name, within a compound word that describes Mañjuśrī as "The holder of all Knowledge-Bodies (*niḥśeṣajñānakāyadhṛk*)". The commentator Narendrakīrti glosses 'all' as 'of all Tathāgatas', making *jñānakāya*'s meaning close to that found in the frame passages.[63]

The initial series of epithets given by Vajradhara to Mañjuśrījñānasattva (in NS 10) and noted earlier included "the Embodiment of Knowledge" (*jñānamūrti*). As well as occuring twice in the *anuśaṃsā* this description is found three times in the core text. The only occurrence of the word as a Name is found in NS 100, where Mañjuśrī is said to be "The Embodiment of Knowledge, the Tathāgata".[64] It also occurs, as has been seen, in the declaration of the opening verse of the core text (NS 26), "I, the Awakened One, the Embodiment of Knowledge (*jñānamūrti*), am in the heart of the Buddhas of the three times". Its third appearance, this time in a compounded form, is in NS 27 (of the "six kingly mantras"): "OṂ – Obeisance to you ... Embodiment of the Knowledge of Wisdom (*prajñājñānamūrtaye*)".[65]

As an epithet *jñānamūrti* emphasises the point that Mañjuśrī as Mañjuśrījñānasattva is not only wisdom (*jñāna*) but also its embodiment (*sattva*). He can be the "Tathāgata" and "the supreme son of the Buddhas" as well as "the progenitor of the Buddhas". The NS contains a wide range of figures embodying wisdom from the whole spectrum of the Buddhist tradition. The identification with Samantabhadra, Vairocana and Vajrasattva has been noted. Elsewhere Mañjuśrījñānasattva is, variously, Mahāvairocana (NS 42), Kṣitigarbha (NS 115), Amoghapāśa (NS 60); Vajrabhairava (NS 66), Yamāntaka (NS 68) and Vajrarāja (NS 71). He is also an Arhat and a *bhikṣu* of controlled senses (NS 52).

Aspects of Mañjuśrī's Portrayal in the Nāmasaṃgīti

Three more aspects of Mañjuśrī's portrayal in the NS are relevant to the present discussion: his identification with the Ādibuddha, with the five Awarenesses (*jñānāni*), and his relation to the letter A.

The word Ādibuddha is used just once in the NS, in the one hundredth verse where Mañjuśrī is described as "Buddha, without beginning or end; Ādibuddha, without [causal] association" (NS 100ab).[66] This single reference to the Ādibuddha bestowed considerable status on the NS for followers of the *Kālacakra* cycle. However, it appears that the NS does not place any particular emphasis on the notion of Mañjuśrī as Ādibuddha. It is not, for example, found among the epithets of NS 10 in the opening verses as is the term *svayaṃbhū*, "Self-Arisen One", which along with *ādibuddha* can be suggestive of a non-Buddhist substantialist doctrine.[67] In any case, the NS is not a systematic work in which the meaning of terms is developed or elaborated. Also, the identifications (i.e. the Names) are generally not repeated; terms such as *jñānakāya*, *jñānamūrti*, *svayaṃbhū*, *ādibuddha* appear just once.

In NS 59 Mañjuśrī is described as "The Lord who has the Five Awarenesses as his nature".[68] The concept of the Five Awarenesses (*jñāna*), sometimes known as the Five Realisations (*abhisaṃbodhi*), is an important structuring notion and hermeneutical device in Buddhist Tantra from the period of the Yogatantras onwards. In Yogatantra cycles the Awarenesses are generally assigned to the five Tathāgatas of the maṇḍala: one to the central figure – the lord of the maṇḍala (*cakreśa*) – and one each to the Tathāgatas of the cardinal directions. Thus, Akṣobhya typically has the Mirror-like Awareness (*ādarsajñāna*); Ratnasaṃbhava, the Awareness of Sameness (*samatājñāna*); Amitābha, the Discriminating Awareness (*pratyavekṣaṇājñāna*); Amoghasiddhi, the Praxis Awareness (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*) and Mahāvairocana, as the central deity, the Awareness of the Perfectly Pure Dharma-Sphere (*suviśuddhadharmadhātujñāna*).[69] The first four Awarenesses have their origin in the Yogācāra tradition as aspects of 'Great Awakening' (*mahābodhi*),[70] but the fifth, the *suviśuddhadharmadhātujñāna*, appears to be a creation of tantric Buddhism. This addition may well exemplify how Mahāyāna doctrinal categories can be modified to meet tantric requirements, in this case for a fivefold structure (due to the maṇḍala having a centre and four directions). The identification of Mañjuśrī with the Five Awarenesses both confirms the view that in the NS Mañjuśrī becomes the wisdom which underlies Buddhahood and also indicates strong Yogatantra influence on the work.[71]

The Five Awarenesses were also adopted as a way of structuring the NS. From at least the time of Mañjuśrīmitra and Vilāsavajra the NS was divided into 14 sections.[72] The verses in the core text that constitute the Names (NS 28–157) are divided into six sections. The verses of the first section (NS 28–41) are said to be on the Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍala, the Yogatantra maṇḍala that has Mahāvairocana at its centre, as just described; those of the remaining five sections are said to be devoted to each of the Five Awarenesses in turn. In the extant manuscripts of the NS the text is sometimes given these divisions, sometimes not.

The letter A also possesses a significant role in the Yogatantras. It is the first letter of the alphabet, and thus can be seen as the letter or sound from which all the others emerge. Its use as a negative prefix also made it the perfect symbol for the essence of the Perfection of Wisdom.[73] For the NS the letter A appears to be more fundamental even than Mañjuśrījñānasattva. Thus NS 28, which follows the two key verses containing the twelve vowels and the "six kingly mantras", reads:

> That is to say, [the Knowledge-Being Mañjuśrī is] the Fortunate One, the Awakened One, the Fully Awakened One, born from the letter A. The letter A is the head of all letters, the great good, the supreme syllable.[74]

If the hypothesis that this verse and the 129 that follow are meant to elaborate and expand on the previous two is correct, the intention here could be to point back to the opening sequence of vowels which precedes the statement, "I, the Awakened One, the Embodiment of Knowledge, am in the heart of the Buddhas of the three times". The vowels can be seen as representing an articulation of wisdom that is closer to it than words can be. They are the source of, and therefore should precede, Mañjuśrī's declaration of being in the heart of the Buddhas. For the NS, the sound of the letter A stands between Vimalakīrti's silence and Mañjuśrī's speech in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*.

Further elucidation of the significance or role of the twelve vowels is inappropriate here, except for two points. Firstly, Vilāsavajra identifies them with twelve Tathāgata stages (*bhūmi*).[75] Secondly, their important position in the NS is indicated by a story in the *Svayaṃbhū Purāṇa*. This late Nepalese Sanskrit account of the appearance of Svayaṃbhū in Nepal and of the origins the Kathmandu valley contains a story of an Indian monk Dharmaśrīmitra who, in past times, is described as wanting to learn the meaning of the twelve vowels of the NS. In his quest for the answer he had started on the long and dangerous journey to China, presumably to Mañjuśrī's residence at Wu' Tai Shan, to ask Mañjuśrī himself their meaning. Passing through Nepal on his journey, Dharmaśrīmitra is saved the trouble of going all the way to China by meeting Mañjuśrī in the Kathmandu valley instead. Mañjuśrī initiates the monk and explains the NS to him. Unfortunately, the *Svayaṃbhū Purāṇa* is not very forthcoming on the contents of the teaching that Dharmaśrīmitra receives from Mañjuśrī concerning the meaning of the vowels, saying only that "by means of these letters, all *śāstras*, and even the Vedas, are produced".[76]

Vilāsavajra's Ritual Elaboration of the *Nāmasaṃgīti* in the NMAA

In Vilāsavajra's commentary on the NS the root text is interpreted within a complex ritual structure. The main element of this structure is a

long *sādhana* centred on NS 26–7, the two verses that open the core text by enumerating the twelve vowels, "A Ā I Ī U Ū ...".[77] In what follows I will attempt to show how, by this means, Vilāsavajra transposes the NS depiction of Mañjuśrī into a ritual framework.

The *sādhana* can be seen as elaborating a statement in the *anuśaṃsā* that,

> He who ... recites [from memory] this crest jewel called the *Nāmasaṃgīti* three times each day, or who recites it from a book [and] who, taking the form of the Fortunate One, Mañjuśrījñānasattva, reflects and meditates on that form ... will before very long see him [ie. Mañjuśrī] in his Form Body (*rūpakāya*), and he will see all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the vault of the sky in their Transformation Form Bodies (*nirmāṇarūpakāya*).[78]

That Vilāsavajra had this passage in mind is indicated by his own citation of the latter part of it in an account of the benefits to be gained from practising the NMAA *sādhana*.[79] The *anuśaṃsā* passage, which continues by detailing how such a practitioner will be protected from a bad rebirth as a result of his actions, has a parallel in the *Mañjuśrīparinirvāṇasūtra*, an early Mahāyāna sūtra devoted to Mañjuśrī.[80] (It should be noted that Mañjuśrī's 'Parinirvāṇa' is not real but performed by him out of concern for the welfare of living beings.) Near its conclusion the text declares:

> Every being who hears even the name of Mañjuśrī being pronounced will be separated from the miseries of rebirth for twelve hundred thousand aeons. Whosoever bows down to and venerates him will be reborn in the family of the Buddhas and will be protected by the power of Mañjuśrī. Those who meditate attentively on the form of Mañjuśrī, [and] on his teaching ... will individually see him and they will all obtain Insight. Those who are not able to see him should recite the *Śūraṃgamasūtra* and say the name of Mañjuśrī. In a period of between one and seven days Mañjuśrī will come to them.[81]

In many respects Vilāsavajra's *sādhana* is not far removed from its roots in the *buddhānusmṛti* type of practice thus described. Mantras replace saying the name of Mañjuśrī – though mantras often consist of, or include, the name of the figure or object they denote – and instead of imagining the form of Mañjuśrī before one, it is visualised as ones own.

Vilāsavajra starts with preliminaries that create the non-tantric Mahāyāna ethical context for the visualisation. Appositely called "the ritualization of moral attitudes" by Stephan Beyer,[82] in the present context this stage consists in the generation of the *bodhicitta* in its two forms, firstly through the vows of the five Buddha-families and secondly, through the development of the Five Awarenesses. In the next stage the meditator imagines his or her consciousness to be naturally radiant and located in empty space. This is a preparation for the visualisation proper, which begins with the mental creation of a maṇḍala with two enclosures. The

outer enclosure is square with an arched doorway in each of its walls. The archways and walls are decorated with "with bells, ornamental strips of cloth, banners, garlands and Yak-tail plumes". In the circular inner enclosure thrones for the central figure and the surrounding subsidiary figures are imagined.

The practitioner next visualises him- or herself as Mahāvairocana at the centre of the maṇḍala, white in colour and four-faced.[83] In the four cardinal directions the Tathāgatas Akṣobhya, Ratnasaṃbhāva, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi are to appear, as are the remaining deities of Vajradhātumaṇḍala upon which the *sādhana* is based.

What is particular about the *sādhana* is the development of the visualisation of the central figure, Mahāvairocana. In his heart, on a moon-disc, transformed out of the syllable DHĪḤ, sits the Ādibuddha, five-faced and eight-armed. The Ādibuddha's four right hands grasp four swords, one in each hand, and his left hands each hold a volume of the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*.[84] If the logic of maṇḍala-symbolism is that the closer one is to the centre, the closer one approaches ultimate truth, then what is being said here is that the Ādibuddha in some sense underlies, or is the source of, the Five Tathāgatas. Whether this underpinning has an ontological as well as a ritual dimension is a further issue; Vilāsavajra, at least, appears not to treat the figure of the Ādibuddha in ontological terms.

The Ādibuddha, however, is not the final element in the visualisation of the central figure and the movement inwards continues. At the heart of the Ādibuddha is a wisdom wheel (*prajñācakra*) on whose spokes and circular bands are placed mantras taken from the NS. At the centre of this wheel and transformed out of the letter A is the figure of Mañjuśrījñānasattva, seated on a variagated lotus throne, six-faced and two armed, holding the stem of a lotus in each hand. On each of the lotus flowers rests a volume of the Perfection of Wisdom.[85]

The tunneling into the heart of the maṇḍala is still not quite complete. On a moon-disc in the heart of Mañjuśrījñānasattva the practitioner imagines the letter A, "the essence of the Perfection of Wisdom, the cause of the arising of the Awareness of the Omniscient Ones, the origin of all Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, the accumulation of the merit and wisdom of all Mahābodhisattvas, the letter of ultimate reality, the cause of all letters",[86] the letter or sound whose enunciation precedes Mañjuśrī's declaration in NS 27 that he is in the heart of the Buddhas of the three times.

The NS description of Mañjuśrījñānasattva as the Knowledge-Body of all the Tathāgatas, and as himself "born from the letter A", is hereby translated into a ritually visualised structure. The structure also implies that Mañjuśrījñānasattva is a more fundamental figure than the Ādibuddha since he is in the Ādibuddha's heart. Given the Ādibuddha is one of the Names rather than the figure being Named, this again is consistent with the text of the NS.

With Mañjuśrījñānasattva at its heart the maṇḍala embodies the understanding that the Names of the NS are those of Mañjuśrījñānasattva. Vilāsavajra treats the Names as mantras: they become the "Name-mantras" of the title of his commentary. Some of the Names become the mantras of particular deities, so that the Names of the fifth section of the NS, for example, become the Name-mantras of the deities of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala, which take their places on the seats visualised for them. Indeed, all the Names, construed as mantras of different 'embodiments' of Non-dual Awareness, are assigned a place in or around the Vajradhātumaṇḍala, thereby creating a single unified structure for the whole NS.

Conclusion

I have tried show that the depiction of Mañjuśrī in the NS is not primarily one of him as a Buddha or even as the Ādibuddha. Though he is so portrayed, such depictions are only possible insofar as he is identified as the *jñāna* that they embody. Thus, the Names of the NS are not straightforwardly the names of Mañjuśrī. I have suggested that this is indicated in the full title of the work, which should be read as "The Name-Chanting associated with the Knowledge-being Mañjuśrī". It is this portrayal that is translated into the sphere of method by Vilāsavajra.

Abbreviations

- Bendall — Cecil Bendall, *Catalogue of the Buddhist Sanskrit Manuscripts in the University Library, Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1883).
- NMAA — *Āryanāmasaṃgītiṭīkā Nāmamantrārthāvalokinī* of Vilāsavajra. NMAA text references are to Tribe, 1994. 'NMAA 4.123' means 'NMAA chapter 4, line 123'. In addition, a folio reference is usually given to Bendall Add. 1708 (identified by the siglum 'A'), a 15th century palm-leaf manuscript of the NMAA.
- NS — *Nāmasaṃgīti*. 'NS 20' means 'NS, verse 20'. Unless otherwise specified, text cited follows NS.Dav.
- NS.Dav. — Text of the NS as published in Davidson, 1981. NS.Dav. 67, 3 means NS.Dav., page 67, line 3.
- Tōh. — Hakuju Ui et al., *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons* (Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934).

Phoneticizations

Derge	sDe dge
Kanjur	bKa' 'gyur
Tanjur	bsTan 'gyur

Notes

Note. This article is a revised version of a paper originally given at *The Eighteenth Symposium on Indian Religions*, Oxford, 1992.

1. The most comprehensive study of Mañjuśrī in (non-tantric) Mahāyāna literature is Etienne Lamotte's monograph, 'Mañjuśrī', 1960. See also, Williams, 1989, pp. 238–41; Akira, 1990, pp. 291–3.
   Mañjuśrī's role as Śākyamuni's interlocutor (e.g. in chapters 12 and 14 of the Lotus sūtra) often shades into that of being his chief spokesman (e.g. in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, the *Saptaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūhasūtra*). An important source for the role of *kalyāṇamitra* is the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*. Other sources include the *Ajātaśatrurājasūtra* – which describes Mañjuśrī as the spiritual friend of the bodhisattvas – and the *Drumakiṃnara-rājaparipṛcchā*, in which Ajātaśatru is told he has the great advantage of having Mañjuśrī as a spiritual friend (Lamotte, *op. cit.*, p. 95). Chapter 12 of the Lotus sūtra provides an example of Mañjuśrī's ability in converting beings to the Dharma, where he is said to have converted innumerable numbers of them after visiting the underwater palace of Sāgara, king of the *nāgas*. The *Ratnakāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* describes how Mañjuśrī converts some of the followers of the Jain teacher Satyaka Nirgranthaputra (Lamotte, 1960, p. 39). Two texts that promote Mañjuśrī as an object of devotion and meditation are the *Mañjuśrībuddhakṣetraguṇavyūhasūtra* and the *Mañjuśrīparinirvāṇasūtra*.
2. See Lalou, 1930, pp. 66–70. For a discussion of Lalou's suggestions regarding the origins of the figure of Mañjuśrī see Tribe, forthcoming.
3. Mañjuśrī is said to be a Buddha of the present in the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*, though not of our universe, but one named Nityapramuditā, 'Always Happy' (Lamotte, 1960., p. 29).
4. See Davidson, 1981; Wayman, 1985. Davidson includes a collation (rather than an edition, since he does not consult any new manuscripts) of the Sanskrit text. He collates the three editions of Minaev, Vira and Mukherji (see note following), noting their variant readings. For the annotated translation Davidson consulted four early commentaries in their Tibetan translation, including the NMAA of Vilāsavajra. There is also a very useful introduction. It is by far the best piece of work published on the NS.
   Wayman provides a Sanskrit text but it is not really a separate edition since he reprints Minaev's text with a very few emendations. The translation is accompanied by annotations that draw principally on four commentaries (different from those consulted by Davidson), again in their Tibetan translations.
5. See Minaev, 1887, pp. 137–59; Davidson (1981, p. 16) reports that Minaev had intended a translation of the NS but that his death in 1890 prevented its appearance. In the 1960s two further editions were published, neither of which, however, made use of Minaev's edition: see Vira, 1962; Mukherji, 1963. The Sanskrit text of Vira's edition, which is of the NS verses only, was reprinted by Vira and Lokesh Candra, (see bibliography under 'Vira'). Mukherji consults neither Minaev's nor Vira's edition, and since he only had one manuscript containing part of the *anuśaṃsā* he retranslates the missing part into Sanskrit from the Tibetan.
6. On the author and date of the NMAA, see Tribe, 1994, pp. 9–23.
7. For a discussion of the relationship between the terms Vajrayāna, Mahāyāna (and Śrāvakayāna) in contemporary Newar Buddhism see Gellner, 1992, pp. 108–14.
8. *mahāmantranayodbhūto mahāmantranayātmakaḥ* (NS 42cd).
9. *kṣiprasiddhir mantramukhacaryācāriṇām bodhisattvānām* (NS.Dav. 63, 4).

10. *acirād eva vajrapāṇe vajradhara paramārthanāmasaṃgītisaṃdhārakapuruṣapuṃgavaḥ susaṃbhṛta-puṇyajñānasaṃbhāraḥ kṣiprataraṃ buddhaguṇān samudānīyānuttarāṃ samyaksaṃbodhim abhisaṃbhotsyate* (NS.Dav. 68, 4–6). Citing this passage the NMAA (5.287–9) has the variants *sarvabuddhaguṇān*, "all Buddha-qualities", and *paramārthanāmasaṃgītisaṃdhārakaḥ puruṣapuṃgavaḥ*. Both of these seem better readings.
11. Despite possessing a tantra-like frame the NS does not describe itself as a tantra but as a *Saṃgīti*, a chanting text. However, the colophon to the NS describes it as "ocurring in the Samādhijāla chapter of the 16,000 verse Mahāyogatantra called the *Āryamāyājāla*". Also, in the opening verses, Vajradhara says he wishes to hear the NS that was "proclaimed in the great tantra [called] the *Māyājāla* by immeasurable joyful great mantra-bearing Vajradharas" (NS 13) so that he can obtain "The [method] of Awakening According to the *Māyājāla*" (NS 7). There does survive a *Māyājālatantra* in Tibetan translation (Tōh. 466) but not in 16,000 verses, and its Samādhi chapter does not contain the NS. The relationship, if any, between the two works awaits investigation. References to the *Māyājālatantra* in the NS only occur in the frame text. If these sections are indeed a later addition then the references could have been included as a way of legitimating the text and giving it a canonical status. Bu-ston classified the NS as a tantra placing it at the head of the tantra section of the Kanjur, immediately preceding the *Kālacakratantra* with which it had come to be associated. However, some manuscript editions of the Kanjur, e.g. the sTog Palace, place the NS before the *Māyājālatantra* (See Skorupski, 1985, p. 229). Also, in line with the statement in its colophon, the Tibetan rNying ma canon classifies the NS as a Mahāyogatantra. See Kaneko, 1982, no. 196. Aside from questions concerning its classification, however, the NS is clearly a tantric work and was treated as such by its many Indian commentators.
12. Davidson, 1981, p. 3.
13. E.g. see Mañjuśrīmitra's *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītyupadeśā* (*'Jam dpal gyi mtshan gdon pa'i man ngag*: Tōh. 2555), which Davidson himself translates (1981, pp. 45–7) from the Tibetan.
14. Vilāsavajra states that the NS consists of 162 verses plus 150 verse equivalents for the *anuśaṃsā* (NMAA 1.43–44; A.2v5–6). Nonetheless, he is aware that the *mantravinyāsa* and *upasaṃhāra* follow the *anuśaṃsā*. In the immediately preceding passage they are enumerated as the final two sections of the NS, and the commentary has a seperate chapter devoted to each. It seems clear that when he assigns 150 verses to the *anuśaṃsā* he is referring to the whole of what follows verses 1–162.
15. See Davidson, 1981, p. 47, note 149.
16. Bajrācārya Dibyabajra informed me (Jan. 1992) that the *anuśaṃsā* used to be chanted – though it was not clear whether this was within his lifetime – but that more recently it was felt that there was no need to include the *anuśaṃsā* as it described the benefits of the NS and was thus not strictly part of it. He argued that the full benefits could still be obtained without chanting the *anuśaṃsā*, and, indeed, modern Nepalese editions of the NS omit it.
17. Davidson argues (1981, p. 47, note 149) that Mañjuśrīmitra and Vilāsavajra's treatment of the *anuśaṃsā*, *mantravinyāsa* and *upasaṃhara* sections as being different from the remainder of the NS suggests that they arose as a unit, later than the earlier verses, and that this supports his theory concerning the stratification and development of the text. However, his hypothesis is that NS 26–162 form the earliest stratum, not NS 1–162.
18. Elements in the NS, such as the presence of wrathful forms embodying wisdom (see NS 66–76), suggest it is not a straightforwardly Yogatantric work. This is supported by the colophon's statement that it is part of a Mahāyogatantra. The Tibetan rNying ma pa canon treats Mahāyogatantras as a distinct class and includes the NS within it (see above, note 11). Mahāyogatantras share characteristics with works such as the *Guhyasamājatantra*, elsewhere classified as Yogottaratantras, and in general, they may be seen as transitional between Yogatantras and the later Yoginītantras that employ the full *kāpālika* symbolism of the cremation ground.
19. Davidson, 1981, p. 5.
20. As with the NS (see above, note 18), the NMAA contains a number of elements that characterise it as part of the transitional period between the Yoga- and Mahāyogatantras. It also contains citations of the proto-Yoginītantra, the *Sarvabuddhasamāyogaḍākinījālasaṃvara* (Tōh 366–7).
21. The difference of interpretation is reflected in the placing of NS-related works in the Tanjur. In the Derge edition six are assigned to the Kālacakra division (Tōh. 1395–1400), thirty-two

to that of the Anuttaratantras (Tōh. 2090–2121), and ninety-one to the Yogatantra section (Tōh. 2532–2622). As Davidson notes some of these placings are somewhat arbitrary and do not accurately reflect the texts' actual perspectives (1981, p.15).

22. This work, the *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītiṭīkā*, is 187 folios in the Derge edition of the Tanjur.
23. See M. E. Carelli, ed., *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series no. 90 (Baroda: 1941). Nāropa also used the NS extensively in his *Hevajratantra* commentary, the *Vajrapadasārasaṃgrahapañjikā*. Wayman (1985, pp. 10–22) has traced 53 citations or incorporations of the NS in this work.
24. An edition of the *Amṛtakaṇikā* and the *Amṛtakaṇikoddyotana* by Dr. Lal Banarsi has been recently published (date unknown) in the Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series of the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath. For an edition and English translation of chapters 1–5 of the NMAA, see Tribe, 1994. Chapters 3 and 4 of the NMAA have also been edited by Sakurai (1988). The *Gūḍhapadā* survives, as far as I know, in a single palm-leaf manuscript (see Cowell and Eggeling, 1876, pp. 25–6).
25. See Shastri, 1927, p. 4, line 5.
26. Translation taken from Chattopadhyaya, 1990, p. 203. The "hymn of praise in 150 verses" must be Mātṛceta's *Śatapañcāśatkastotra*. Bu ston's more abbreviated account can be found in Obermiller, 1932 (see pp. 132–3 in 1986 edition).
27. See Lalou, 1953, p. 329, note 438. Giuseppe Tucci has argued that the lDan dkar catalogue was subject to revisions and additions with the result that it must be dated to later than the reign of Khri srong lde btsan. He suggests a figure of 812 CE (see Tucci, 1958, p. 46, note 1).
28. See de La Vallée Poussin, 1962, pp. 43, 126.
29. I use the word 'Knowledge' to render *jñāna* here. This term is famously difficult to translate: on the whole I prefer 'Awareness' in that it emphasises *jñāna*'s experiential or subjective pole, but 'Awareness-Being' seemed even less satisfactory that 'Knowledge-Being'. However, for *advayajñāna* and the *pañca jñānāni* I have consistently used 'Awareness' (thus, 'Non-dual Awareness' and 'the Five Awarenesses'). Elsewhere, and outside of these more technical uses of *jñāna*, I have also relied on 'wisdom' as a translation.
30. These epithets all occur in NS 10, which the NMAA reads as, *bhagavan jñānakāyasya mahoṣṇīṣasya gīṣpateḥ / mañjuśrījñānasattvasya jñānamūrteḥ svayaṃbhuvaḥ //*, treating *bhagavan* as a vocative that opens a new sentence. NS.Dav. takes the first two words as compounded, "the Knowledge-Body of the Fortunate One (*bhagavajjñānakāyasya*)".
31. *sarvatathāgatajñānakāyasya mañjuśrījñānasattvasyāveṇikapariśuddhā nāmasaṃgītiḥ* (NS.Dav. 61, 21–22 [*anuśaṃsā*]); *bhagavato mañjuśrījñānasattvasya sarvatathāgatajñānakāyasya jñānamūrter advayaparamārthāṃ nāmasaṃgītiṃ* (NS.Dav. 65, 3–4 [*anuśaṃsā*]); *mañjuśrījñānasattvasya paramārthā nāmasaṃgītiḥ* (NS.Dav. 69, 9–10 [colophon]).
32. *bhagavato mañjuśrījñānasattvasya rūpam ālambayann* (NS.Dav. 66, 23 [*anuśaṃsā*]).
33. *mahārthāṃ nāmasaṃgītiṃ pavitrām aghanāśanīṃ /*
    mañjuśrījñānakāyasya mattaḥ śrotuṃ samudyataḥ // (NS 21)
34. See note 31 for the two *anuśaṃsā* citations.
35. This accords with Vilāsavajra's analysis of the compound: *kiṃviśiṣṭasya jñānakāyasyeti jñānam eva kāyo jñānakāyas tasya* (NMAA 1.203–4; A.7r5).
36. *janakaḥ sarvabuddhānāṃ* (NS 60a)
37. *buddhaputraḥ paro varaḥ /* (NS 60b). Again this (provisionally) assumes that the predicates of the NS core text qualify Mañjuśrījñānasattva as their subject. For discussion of this issue see the section following.
38. *jñānasattva iti / sarvatathāgatahṛdayavihāritvāt / mañjuśrīś cāsau jñānasattvaś ceti mañjuśrījñānasattvaḥ / nāyaṃ daśabhūmīśvaro bodhisattvaḥ kiṃ tarhy advayajñānaṃ prajñāpāramitā saiva mañjuśrījñānasattvaḥ // ata evāha dignāgapādaḥ / prajñāpāramitā jñānam advayaṃ sā tathāgata iti //* (NMAA 1.215–220; A.7v4–6). The citation is the opening verse of Dignāga's Yogācāra Perfection of Wisdom commentary, the *Prajnāpāramitāpiṇḍārtha*. This reflects Vilāsavajra's own largely Yogācāra perspective, which in my view mirrors that of the NS more accurately than that of the Madhyamaka.
39. In distinction to the *jñānasattva*, the *samayasattva* is regarded as the purified receptacle or basis for the arising of liberating wisdom. One of the self-characterisations of the Mantrayāna is in terms of a contrast between itself as the "The Way of the Result" (*phalayāna*) as against "The Way of the Cause" (*hetuyāna*), typified by the sūtra-based Way of the Perfections (*pāramitānaya*). What this means is that the mantrin brings the result (or 'effect') of the path, namely, Buddhahood in the form of a visualised deity, into the path as a factor in its development

through a magical identification with it, thereby accelerating progress towards the goal. The non-*tāntrika*, on the other hand, progresses in a more slow, graded, step by step manner, maturing the causes that will result in his or her attainment of enlightenment. Having created the *samayasattva*, therefore, the mantrin effects a ritual identification with the goal by invoking the *jñānasattva* who descends and merges with the *samayasattva*. Tsong kha pa discusses the notion of *hetu*- and *phalayāna* in his *sNags rim chem mo*, citing Śraddhākaravarman's *Yogānuttaratantrārthāvatārasaṃgraha* (Tōh. 3713) as a source. For an English translation, see Hopkins, 1977, pp. 105–107.

40. I do not know of any research on the development or role of the pairing of *jñānasattva* and *samayasattva*. mKhas grub rje, in his *rGyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa rgyas par brjod* (*Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras*), has the following to say in the chapter on Yogatantra:

    One generates the Symbolic Being (*samayasattva*) and draws in the Knowledge Being (*jñānasattva*), then applies the seals of the four Seals, but not if there is only the Symbolic Being or only the Knowledge Being. The purpose of executing the seals of the four Seals is to merge and unify the Body, Speech, Mind and Acts of the Knowledge Being with the body, speech, mind and acts of the Symbolic Being. There would be no foundation for merger if either were present by itself. This is comparable to having both Self Generation and Generation in Front. (Quoted from Lessing and Wayman, 1980, p. 235).

    This suggests that the *samayasattva-jñānasattva* distinction was in use in the Yogatantras, though mKhas grub rje cites the explanatory Tantras, the *Paramādya* and the *Vajraśekhara*, rather than the root Yogatantra, the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*, as confirming the picture he gives of the relation between the seals (*mudrā*) and the *sattvas*. In the NMAA Vilāsavajra cites both the *Paramādyatantra* and *Vajraśekharatantra*, which suggests he was familiar with their content. However, mKhas grub rje's citation of these works is not any indicator of how full a treatment they give to the subject. The question of whether Vilāsavajra was aware of the notion of drawing the *jñānasattva* into the *samayasattva*, but choose to elaborate his *sādhana* differently, or whether his approach contributed to the development of that notion requires further investigation.

41. Davidson (1981) neither discusses the title of the NS nor the issue of whom the NS Names name.
42. This title is found within the titles of the secondary works, e.g. the *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītiṭīkā* of Mañjuśrīkīrti (Tōh. 2534). These texts survive only in Tibetan translation, however, the original Sanskrit versions being lost. As a result, the titles appear at the beginning of the translations (and sometimes in colophons or index volumes), either transliterated into Tibetan script or in translation (or both). See also Tōh. 2537, 2098, 1396, 2536, 1399, 2539, 2093, 1398, 2535, 2090.
43. I have discounted the possibility that, in the title phrase *mañjuśrījñānasattvasya paramārthā nāmasaṃgītiḥ*, *nāmasaṃgītiḥ* is a *sāpekṣasamāsa*, i.e. that the genitive *mañjuśrījñānasattvasya* qualifies *nāma* rather than *nāmasaṃgītiḥ*. Given that the term *nāmasaṃgītiḥ* often appears on its own in the NS and that *mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītiḥ* never appears such an interpretation seems unlikely.
44. *tasya mañjuśrījñānasattvasya pañcajñānātmakasya saṃbandhinī yā nāmasaṃgītis tāṃ cāhaṃ dhārayiṣyāmīti* (NMAA 1.221–222; A.7v6).
45. *a ā i ī u ū e ai o au aṃ aḥ sthito hṛdi /*
    jñānamūrtir ahaṃ buddho buddhānāṃ tryadhvavartinām //
    oṃ vajratīkṣṇa duḥkhaccheda prajñājñānamūrtaye /
    jñānakāya vāgīśvara arapacanāya te namaḥ // (NS 26–27).
46. *atha śākyamunir bhagavān sakalaṃ mantrakulaṃ mahat /*
    mantravidyādharakulaṃ vyavalokya kulatrayam //
    lokalokottarakulaṃ lokālokakulaṃ mahat /
    mahāmudrākulaṃ cāgryaṃ mahoṣṇīṣakulaṃ mahat //
    imāṃ ṣaṇmantrarājānasaṃyuktāṃ advayodayām /
    anutpādadharmiṇīṃ gāthāṃ bhāṣate sma girāṃ pateḥ // (NS 23–5).
47. *girāṃ pater mañjuśrījñānasattvasya saṃbandhinī yānutpādadharmiṇī gāthā tām imāṃ bhāṣate* (NMAA 3.5–7; A.11r2–3).
48. This verse remains obscure to me. Vilāsavajra divides it into six mantras, which he takes as those of six primary manifestations of Mañjuśrījñānasattva. For a series of visualisations centred on these figures, see NMAA 4.201–253. See also, Davidson, 1981, p. 22, note 63.

49. NS 28, however, can be read otherwise. See the section on Mañjuśrī as the letter A, below.
50. *tad yathā* could be interpreted as governing just NS 28, or NS 28–9, but this makes the status of the remaining verses very problematic.
51. Although Mañjuśrīmitra's *Nāmasaṃgītivṛtti* (Tōh. 2532) deals with just NS 1–162, his *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītyupadeśa* (*Jam dpal gyi mtshan gdon pa'i man ngag*, Tōh. 2555) refers also to the *anuśaṃsā* and *mantravinyāsa.*
52. *nāmāni yogakriyācaryātantrapravacanasūtrāntābhidharmavinayalaukikalokottarāṇi sarvasthāvarajaṅgamāni ca / teṣāṃ nāmnāṃ saṃgītir iti* (NMAA 1.58–60; A.3r4–5). Vilāsavajra is exploiting the Abhidharma sense of *nāma* as a linguistic unit of greater length than a word here, and also the sense of 'things' as nameables. See Pruden, 1988, vol. 1, p. 250ff.
53. *gauṇyā sthityā na paramārthataḥ saṃvṛtyā tu / nāmamātram idaṃ sarvam ā bhavāgraparicchedam iti nyāyāt* (NMAA 160–61; A.3r5–6).
Wayman (1985, p. 9) takes the view that the Names are expressive of the ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*) about Mañjuśrī, and that the glosses and further identifications made by commentators represent the level of conventional truth. Some of the verses of the NS might suggest this interpretation, but for many it is not really tenable. Is a purified Bhikṣu or a Pratyekabuddha Mañjuśrī's ultimate nature? Surely it is the other way round. Wayman's analysis is based on his reading the full title of the NS as containing the single word *paramārthanāmasaṃgītiḥ* in which he takes *paramārtha* as qualifying *nāma.* As a result Wayman is committed to explaining the Names as ultimate. In fact the title, as given in the colophon of all the MSS that have been edited, contains the two words *paramārthā nāmasaṃgītiḥ.* Here it is clearly the NS, rather than *nāma*, that is qualified as *paramārtha*. The single word *paramārthanāmasaṃgītiḥ* does occur in the *anuśaṃsā*, where, on the basis of the reading in the colophon, as well as on the content of the text, it makes most sense to take *paramārtha* as qualifying *nāmasaṃgīti*, rather than *nāma.*
54. *tad yathā bhagavān buddhaḥ saṃbuddho 'kārasaṃbhava ity evamādibhir nāmamantrākṣarapadair … viśeṣyo jñānasattvaḥ sarvatathāgatahṛdayavihārī mañjuśrīḥ śrīmatāṃ vara iti draṣṭavyaḥ* (NMAA 5.269–272; A.29v4–6): "It should be understood that 'Mañjuśrī, the best of the glorious', the Knowledge-Being who dwells in the heart of all the Tathāgatas, is qualified [in the *Nāmasaṃgīti*] by phrases, whose words are Name-mantras …, the first of which is 'That is to say, [he is] the Fortunate One, the Awakened One, the Fully Awakened One, born from the letter A'."
55. *sarvasampatkaraḥ śrīmān mañjuśrīḥ śrīmatāṃ varaḥ //* (NS 157cd). The second *pāda* of this line could be rendered as, "Mañjuśrī is the best of the glorious". Although this might appear more appropriate, it would treat the *pāda* in a different way from what is apparently the general rule for most of the core verses of the NS, where each *pāda* is itself a Name.
56. Lokesh Candra's article, 'Nāma-saṅgīti is a Hymn of Advaya Names', (1987), came to my attention after I had formed these conclusions concerning the interpretation of the titles and Names of the NS.
Candra notices the ambiguity of the expression *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* and similarly argues that it should be read as 'the NS of Mañjuśrī'. His conclusion, however, is that Mañjuśrī is no more than a figure in the transmission of the NS, ie. that Mañjuśrī recites the NS, and argues that the Names are *advaya* names of Vairocana (or 'Mahāvairocana', Candra seems not to settle for one in particular) and the Awarenesses (*jñānāni*) of the Tathāgatas of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala. His argument largely rests on interpreting the term *advayaparamārthā* – found qualifying the NS in the colophon of a few Sanskrit manuscripts (e.g. Bendall, Add. 1323) – as meaning 'the essence of the Yoga tantras'. The NS colophons generally read *paramārthā* (NS.Dav. 69 records *advayaparamārthā* just once) though *advayaparamārthā* could have been imported under the influence of its appearance, unnoticed by Candra, in the *anuśaṃsā* (see NS.Dav. 65, 4). In any case, *advayaparamārthā* is more straightforwardly understood in the sense of "having the Non-dual as its ultimate meaning". I remain unconvinced that the term *advaya* has a technical usage whereby it refers to the Yogatantras, and to the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* in particular, as Candra maintains. In general, Candra fails to take account of the content of the NS, particularly NS 25–7, and relies, rather uncritically, on colophons and titles of the NS and its commentaries. For instance, after noting the existence of the NMAA he comments (p. 181) that "Mañjuśrī is not an integral part of the title and the commentary explains the Meaning of the names and mantras". It may be true that the word 'Mañjuśrī' is not part of the NMAA's title, but this does not prevent Mañjuśrījñānasattva being the central figure of the NMAA who is qualified by the Name-mantras – not 'names

and mantras' – (*nāmamantrā-*) whose meaning (*-ārthā-*) is to be explained (*-āvalokinī*), according to the commentary's title. Nonetheless, Candra's conclusions are not so distant from mine or, indeed, Vilāsavajra's. The Names of the NS appear to predicate a figure that underlies all forms and embodiments of wisdom and whereas I believe there are good reasons for identifying this figure as Mañjuśrījñānasattva, Candra takes the figure to be (Mahā)vairocana. Although he takes the frame text to be a later stratum Candra has to refer to it in order to argue his position. If this is the case, he then needs to account for the other frame text material that points to Mañjuśrījñānasattva as being the figure Named. Furthermore, if it is (Mahā)vairocana who is Named, the inclusion of both Mahāvairocana (NS 42) and Vairocana (NS 62) as Names requires explanation. Both Candra and Vilāsavajra agree that, in effect, it is *jñāna* that is Named, though Candra appears to follow Wayman in taking the Names themselves to be on the level of ultimate truth (*paramārthasatya*).

57. An important dimension to the 'personality' of Mañjuśrī, which is beyond the scope of the present discussion, is his association with speech and language, as seen in many of his other names and epithets, e.g. Mañjughoṣa, Vāgīśvara, Mañjusvara.
58. *jñānam advayarūpadhṛk* (NS 99b).
59. *advayo dvayavādī ca bhūtakoṭivyavasthitaḥ* (NS 47ab): "Non-dual; teacher of duality; established at the limit of reality". The reading *dvayavādī* follows the gloss of the NMAA; NS.Dav. has *'dvayavādī*, "teacher of non-duality".
60. For the Skt. of NS 26, see note 45. The interpretation of *advayodayām[...gāthām]* is not problem-free. The NMAA appears to construe it as a locative *bahuvrīhi* compound, giving "in which there is the source of the Non-dual" (NMAA 4.123–4).
61. *advayaparamārthāṃ nāmasaṃgītiṃ* (NS.Dav. 65, 4).
62. *māyājāla namas tubhyaṃ namas te buddhanāṭaka /*
namas te sarva sarvebhyo jñānakāya namo 'stu te // (NS 162).
For the Skt. of NS 27 see note 45.
63. Wayman (1985, p. 97) cites this comment from Narendrakīrti's *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītivyākhyāna* (Tōh. 1397).
64. *jñānamūrtis tathāgataḥ* (NS 100d).
65. For the text of NS 26–27 see note 45.
66. *anādinidhano buddha ādibuddha niranvayaḥ /* (NS 100ab). The predicate 'without association' (*niranvaya*) appears to indicate that the term *ādibuddha* is understood as refering to something beyond the sphere of causation.
67. *svayaṃbhū* appears as a Name in NS 61cd: "Born from the sky, Self-Arisen" (*gaganodbhavaḥ svayaṃbhūḥ*).
68. *pañcajñānātmako vibhuḥ* (NS 59b).
69. These are the five Tathāgatas of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala of the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* [*tantra*], the fundamental work of the Yogatantra class. The correspondences with the Five Awarenesses are not made in the tantra. They are present in the commentaries of Śākyamitra (*Kosalālaṃkāra*, Tōh 2503) and Ānandagarbha (*Tattvāloka*, Tōh. 2510), though these authors may be placed in the 10th century CE, being, therefore, considerably later than Vilāsavajra who also makes the correlations (see NMAA 1.13–16; A.IV5–6). On the development of the five Tathāgatas, see Yoritomi, 1990, pp. 693–716 (English text); for two diagrams of the Vajradhātumaṇḍala see Snellgrove, 1987, pp. 209–213.
70. For a discussion of the role of the four Awarenesses in the Yogācāra, see de La Vallée Poussin, 1928–9, pp. 681–92.
71. The importance of a fivefold structure is emphasised by all the Names of NS 59: "Awakened One, with five body nature; Lord who has the Five Awarenesses as his nature; with a crown that has the five Buddhas as its nature; with five eyes, unattached" (*pañcakāyātmako buddhaḥ pañcajñānātmako vibhuḥ / pañcabuddhātmamakuṭaḥ pañcacakṣur asaṅgadhṛk //*). Note the proximity of the Five Buddhas and Five Awarenesses. However, no identification between them is made explicit.
72. See Table 1 for a summary of this information.
73. Hence, the shortest of Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, "The Perfection of Wisdom in One Letter", which, though lost in Sanskrit, is preserved in Tibetan translation (*bCom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi yum yi ge gcig ma zhes bya ba*, Tōh. 23). For an English translation, see Conze, 1973, p. 201. Another tantric Perfection of Wisdom sūtra, the Perfection of Wisdom in 150 lines (*Adhyardhaśatikā prajñāpāramitā*), associates Mañjuśrī

with the teaching of the letter A as the essence of the Perfection of Wisdom (see *ibid.*, p. 188) (I am grateful to Dr. Paul Williams for drawing this to my attention).

74. *tad yathā bhagavān buddhaḥ saṃbuddho 'kārasaṃbhavaḥ / akāraḥ sarvavarṇāgryo mahārthaḥ paramākṣaraḥ* // (NS 28).
The translation I have given follows Vilāsavajra (see NMAA 5.269–272; A.29v4–6, partially cited in note 54). Others are clearly possible, for example, "That is to say, the Fortunate One, the Awakened One, the Fully Awakened One, is born from the letter A", taking *akārasaṃbhavaḥ* as the predicate, being a more natural reading of the first half-verse. Thus, Wayman (*op. cit.*, p. 68): "Accordingly, is the Buddha, Bhagavat, the Sambuddha arisen from A". Davidson (*op. cit.*, p. 22) takes the two half verses together with *akāraḥ* as the predicate: "And in this way, the blessed one, the Buddha [Mañjuśrī], the completely awakened, born from the syllable A, is the syllable A, the foremost of all phonemes, of great meaning, the supreme syllable". Vilāsavajra's interpretation, however, has the advantage of making the whole of the first half-verse into a series of predicates (and therefore Names) of the unstated subject, Mañjuśrījñānasattva, in line with the notion that NS 28–157 consists of a series of predicate Names. The second half-verse has to be understood, in this view, as parenthetical.
Compare, also, the mantra, *oṃ akāro mukhaṃ sarvadharmāṇām ādyanutpannatvāt*, "The sound 'A' is the first of all *dharmas* since it is unarisen from the beginning". In the NMAA it is cited in the context of instructions for developing the Discriminating Awareness (*pratyavekṣaṇājñāna*) (NMAA 4.46; A.13r4). A useful discussion of the letter A and its role in Yogatantra literature is found under the entry 'A' in Demiéville, 1929. Allied to the idea that all sounds emerge out of the vowel A is the view, probably first elaborated by the Mahāsāṃghikas and found in a number of Mahāyāna sūtras, that the Buddha taught by expressing just one sound that was interpreted by each hearer according to their individual spiritual needs. On this see Lamotte, 1962, chap. 1, note 52.

75. See NMAA 4.130–146 (A.15v4–16r3), which contains a citation from the *Vajramaṇḍālaṃkāra-tantra*.

76. Mitra, 1981, p. 255. Neither this account nor the NMAA say anything about why there are twelve, rather than sixteen or four, vowels. Such as it is, the explanation given in the *Svayaṃbhū Purāṇa* does not conflict with that of the NMAA, though by implication Vilāsavajra goes further so as to include all mundane objects as products of the vowels.

77. The *sādhana* evolves through chapters 4–10 of Vilāsavajra's commentary, with the whole of chapter 4 being devoted to the establishment of the basic maṇḍala and central deity. See NMAA 4.1–258 (A.9r6–15r7, though the latter folios of chapter 4 are lost in Bendall Add. 1708). The following account is necessarily highly condensed.

78. *yā imāṃ nāmasaṃgītiṃ nāma cūḍāmaṇiṃ pratyaham ... triḥkṛtvā kaṇṭhagatām āvartayiṣyati / pustakagatāṃ vā paṭhamānaḥ pravartayiṣyati / bhagavato mañjuśrījñānasattvasya rūpam ālambayann anuvicintayaṃs tatrūpam anudhyāyan / tam eva rūpakāyenācirād eva ... drakṣyati / gaganatalagatāṃś ca sarvabuddhabodhisattvān nānānirmāṇarūpakāyaiḥ sahagatān drakṣyati* / (NS.Dav. 66, 21–6)

79. See NMAA 4.193–198 (A.17v5–18r2).

80. The *Mañjuśrīparinirvāṇasūtra*, the original Sanskrit of which has been lost, was translated into Chinese by Nie Tao-tchen, the collaborator of Dharmarakṣa, at the end of the third century CE. It is a short work, less than four pages in Lamotte's French translation (Lamotte, 1960, pp. 36–9).

81. Translated from Lamotte, 1960, p. 38.

82. Beyer, 1973, p. 29.

83. The NMAA text depicts Mahāvairocana a little more fully, giving an explanation (*viśuddhi*) of his attributes: "And then, on the principal seat, [he should visualise] Mahāvairocana, generated by means of the syllable ĀḤ. [Why has he four faces?] Because consciousness – which is of the nature of the Dharma-Sphere since, by its nature, it lacks such forms as the grasped – is four-faced, since the four faces that are the freedoms (*vimokṣa*) of emptiness and the rest, are the avenues through which all *samādhi*-s arise since their [that is, the freedoms'] object is the Dharma-Sphere. He is white in colour because he has the Dharma-Sphere as his nature; he has braids of hair [stacked up on his head] as a crown and is unadorned, because he is one whose mind is tranquil; [and] he makes the *bodhyagrī* gesture because he has both wisdom and means as his nature." (*tataś ca pradhānāsana āḥkāreṇa pariniṣpannaṃ mahāvairocanam / yato yad eva cittaṃ prakṛtyā grāhakādyākāravirahād dharmadhātusvabhāvaṃ tad eva caturmukhaṃ śūnyatādicaturvimokṣamukhānāṃ dharmadhātor ālambanatvena sarvasamādhiprasūtihetutvāt / śuklavarṇaṃ

dharmadhātusvabhāvatvāt / jaṭāmakuṭopetaṃ nirābharaṇaṃ ca śāntacittatvāt / bodhyagrīmudrāyuktaṃ prajñopāyātmakatvāt // NMAA 4.100–105; A.14v5–15r2).

84. This is the longest of the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras and as such came to be regarded as the original from which all shorter sūtras were derived as condensations. The text provides a few more details concerning the visualised form of the Ādibuddha: "[The five faces are] endowed with five colours: dark blue in the east; yellow in the south; red in the west; green in the north; on the top, he has a white face, the face of the most excellent horse. He is tranquil, with the ornaments of a youth, possessing the erotic [sentiment, and] wearing about himself a cloth of many colours." (*pañcavarṇopetaṃ / pūrveṇa nīlaṃ dakṣiṇena pītaṃ paścimena raktam uttareṇa haritaṃ / mūrdhni paramāśvamukhavad avasthitaṃ mukhaṃ śvetaṃ <yasya taṃ> / śāntaṃ kumārābharaṇopetaṃ saśṛṅgāraṃ vicitravastraparidhānam* … NMAA 4.109–113; A.15r4–5).

85. The full instruction for the visualisation of Mañjuśrījñānasattva runs as follows: "[Next,] he should visualise himself as the Fortunate One, the Knowledge-Being [Mañjuśrī], born from the letter A situated in the middle of that [wisdom-]wheel, with six faces, radiant like the autumn moon, with the best of sapphires in his beautiful hair, with a halo that has the brilliance of the orb of the newly risen sun, with all the Tathāgatas as [head-]ornaments, immersed in *samādhi*, seated on a variagated lotus throne, with two books of the Prajñāpāramitā above blue lotuses held in his two hands, [and] as in the Sentiment of Tranquillity." (*tasya cakrasya madhyavartinam akārajaṃ bhagavantaṃ ṣaṇmukhaṃ jñānasattvaṃ śaracchaśāṅkaprabham indranīlāgrasaccīraṃ bālārkamaṇḍalacchāyaprabhāmaṇḍalaṃ sarvatathāgatamayābharaṇaṃ samādhisamāpannaṃ vicitrapadmāsanopaviṣṭam ubhayakarāsaktanīlotpalordhvasthitaprajñāpāramitāpustakadvayaṃ śāntarasopetam ātmānaṃ vicintya* NMAA 4.172–6; A.17r2–4).

86. *prajñāpāramitāsvabhāvaṃ sarvajñajñānodayakāraṇaṃ sarvaśrāvakapratyekabuddhānām utpattibhūtaṃ sarvamahābodhisattvānāṃ punyajñānasaṃbhārabhūtaṃ paramārthākṣaraṃ sarvākṣarāṇāṃ kāraṇabhūtam* [*akāraṃ vinyaset*] (NMAA 4.177–180; A.17r4–6).

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Caskets of Treasures and Visions of Buddhas[1]

Indic antecedents of the Tibetan gTer-ma Tradition

Robert Mayer, University of Kent at Canterbury

Although much has been written about *gter-ma* in recent decades, its interesting continuities with earlier Indic systems of scriptural revelation seem so far to remain understated. In this paper I therefore intend to argue that the *gter-ma* tradition is primarily a Tibetan elaboration of Buddhist systems already well attested in Indian literature many centuries before the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet – rather than a syncretic development derivative of indigenous Tibetan religion, or a Buddhist invention entirely unique to Tibet, as some scholars have suggested. Thus *gter-ma* would appear very much in line with the rest of Tibetan Buddhism, a salient feature of which is the reception of given Indian Buddhist ideas, followed by their subsequent development within Tibet. To illustrate: Tibetans, not Indians, developed the *bodhisattva* doctrine into the *sprul-sku* or incarnate lama system; concretised the division of the Madhyamaka into its Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika branches; and developed the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine into the comprehensive "Great Madhyamaka" (*dbu-ma chen-po*). What characterises such Tibetan developments is that they are not syncretic; in other words, they do not involve the admixture of indigenous Tibetan beliefs with imported Buddhist beliefs. Nor are they fresh inventions entirely unique to Tibet. On the contrary, they are more fruitfully understood as Buddhist developments of Buddhist ideas, albeit worked out on Tibetan soil. What I wish to argue is that this seems as true of the *gter-ma* tradition as of, say, the systematic division of Madhyamaka into Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika.

What then are the Indian antecedents from which the *gter-ma* tradition evolved? Here, I shall be looking at only two of several such antecedents: firstly, the systems of revelation and transmission described in the early Mahāyāna sūtra, the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (henceforth PraS); and secondly, the tantric cult, both Hindu and Buddhist, of discovering hidden treasures (*nidhi*). Other relevant topics I cannot

discuss here include the revelatory mystical journeys of such sages as Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga; other Mahāyāna sūtra texts that describe scriptural revelation; and the methods of revealing tantric scriptures. All these features of Indian Buddhism have parallels, survivals, or revivals, in the Tibetan revelatory traditions. Nevertheless this short paper must necessarily be limited in scope.

The PraS

The PraS, or *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present*, received increased western scholarly attention after Paul Harrison's critical edition of the Tibetan text was published in 1978,[2] followed by his annotated English translation published in 1990. It was in 1983, after reading Harrison's unpublished PhD thesis, that Paul Williams first drew my attention to the PraS as a precursor of the Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition. Likewise Harrison himself has also commented that chapter 13 of the PraS "is an interesting adumbration of the later Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition".[3] According to Harrison, the PraS is, along with the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā*, the oldest datable Mahāyāna sūtra. The Chinese translations of both scriptures were presented on the same day in 179 CE by Lokakṣema, the Indo-scythian translator then active in the Chinese capital of Luoyang.[4] The PraS was also one of the first scriptures to be translated into Tibetan, since it is listed in the lDan-kar-ma Catalogue.[5] The PraS became very important in the Far East for the Pure Land school, and it might have been important in Central Asia,[6] from where one Sanskrit fragment has been recovered. In India, although the type of doctrine the PraS teaches was widely accepted, there is little hard evidence of the PraS itself being very popular, since it is mentioned only obliquely in a few extant Sanskrit sources.[7] Nor is it usually mentioned in the surviving standard Mahāyāna compendia of sūtra materials, except for one interesting exception – the third *Bhāvanākrama* of Kamalaśīla.[8] This may be historically significant, because Kamalaśīla wrote his *Bhāvanākrama* especially for the people of Tibet at the time of their first conversion to Buddhism, and he was also associated with Padmasambhava, with whom his master Śāntarakṣita formed a close partnership;[9] and it is the figure of Padmasambhava, of course, who lies at the heart of the Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition. Thus, we have some historical evidence that the *gter-ma*-like doctrines of the PraS were known among the very circles of people that Tibetan sources maintain were responsible for creating their *gter-ma* tradition.

According to traditional sources, there are three systems of scriptural production and transmission counted by the rNying-ma pa: the *bka'-ma* (or Oral Transmission), the *gter-ma* (or Treasure Tradition), and the *dag-snang* (or Pure Vision Tradition). The *bka'-ma* is uncontroversial, comprising

simply the lineal transmission of scripture from master to pupil, in many cases reputed to have begun with the historical Buddha. The other two systems of transmission (which people sometimes tend to conflate, despite the major conceptual differences between them) are both controversial and are both dealt with at length in the PraS, from where we can see how the Treasure and Pure Vision systems aroused the same kind of criticism two thousand years ago that they still arouse today. For example, in PraS Chapter 13, the future treasure discoverers lament the difficulty they will face in the future in propagating scriptures which will never have been heard of before. Likewise, the whole of Chapter 6 of the PraS is devoted to a defence of the Pure Vision teachings.[10] Nevertheless, subtextual nuances suggest that the PraS and Tibetan revelatory traditions alike attempt to derive a degree of inverted legitimation precisely from the indignation they arouse in those they characterise as insufficiently broad-minded.

The *samādhi* after which the PraS is named – the *samādhi* of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present – is the main teaching of the PraS, largely contained in Chapter 3; it describes the deliberate cultivation of a Pure Vision type of transmission. But in Chapter 13, the PraS prophesies the history of its own transmission as a text, and this portrays a Treasure type of transmission. Although this paper is largely concerned with the Treasure tradition, I shall nevertheless very briefly first touch upon the Pure Vision system.

The Pure Vision system

Chapter 3 of the PraS describes how meditators should systematically cultivate visionary encounters with celestial Buddhas (e.g. Amitāyus) by means of specific contemplations. Thus they can receive teachings directly from the celestial Buddhas, and subsequently propagate these as newly revealed scriptures.[11] Paul Williams believes that this teaching of visionary encounter with Buddhas, as expressed so vividly in the PraS but included in other sūtra texts as well, "provides a convincing basis for understanding the origins of at least some of the Mahāyāna sūtras".[12] But in the PraS, there is an unexpected quality to this *samādhi*: it can be practised by ordinary persons without advanced supernormal powers.[13] This compares very closely with the rNying-ma-pa Pure Vision (*dag-snang*) tradition. Tulku Thondup writes:

> Pure Vision teachings are not Terma. They are merely teachings given by Buddhas, deities and teachers in visions. For this discovery the discoverer does not need to be such a highly realised person.[14]

However, Dudjom Rinpoche (1904–1987) seems to imply that the Pure Vision tradition does in practice, even if not in theory, often depend upon

highly realised persons as the visionaries. Perhaps the visions of realised beings inspire greater confidence; or perhaps different scriptural sources vary a little. Dudjom Rinpoche cites the *Ārya-sarva-puṇya-samuccaya-samādhi-sūtra*, describing how realised *bodhisattvas* perpetually dwell in a purified perceptual sphere, which allows them to be in continuous dialogue with celestial Buddhas and deities. Thus they receive innumerable visionary teachings, which they sometimes propagate amongst their fortunate disciples. These, writes Dudjom Rinpoche, are the Pure Vision teachings.[15] In either case, it would appear that identical or similar methods to those by which Mahāyāna scriptures were produced in the early centuries CE still continue to be used by present-day Tibetan visionaries in producing contemporary Pure Vision teachings.

The Treasure system

The Treasure system has a more complex and distinctive structure than the Pure Vision system, with diachronic as well as synchronic elements. Although it seems to be described in passing in several sutras, for example in *The Manifestation of Lights Sūtra* from the *Mahāratnakūṭa* collection (T 310),[16] as far as I know the Treasure system is most fully described in the PraS's Chapter 13, which describes a complex Treasure system which shares a basic structure and key technical terms with the Tibetan *gter-ma* system.[17] The correspondences are so precise that it seems quite reasonable to conclude that the Tibetan system is at least in part derived from the system described in the PraS.

Chapter 13 of the PraS opens with the layman Bhadrapāla, here the Buddha's chief interlocutor, asking the Buddha a very significant question. Bhadrapāla, famous in many Mahāyāna sūtra texts as the leader of the "Sixteen good [lay]men",[18] appears here as the first among a group of eight great lay *bodhisattvas*, the principal recipients of the teachings that the Buddha gives in the PraS. They are accompanied by an important second grouping of five hundred monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, who are also attending the teachings as secondary recipients. Bhadrapāla's question is: what will happen to the teachings the Buddha has just given after his *parinirvāṇa*?

The Buddha replies to Bhadrapāla's question with a major prophecy. He predicts that the teachings of the PraS which he has just given will disappear forty years[19] after his *parinirvāṇa*. Just before that time, however, the eight great lay *bodhisattvas* led by Bhadrapāla will make written copies of the teachings and seal them in caskets (*sgrom-bu*). These caskets will then be hidden in *stūpas*, in the earth, under rocks, and in the mountains; and will be placed under the guardianship of *deva* and *nāga* spirits. Then Bhadrapāla and his friends will die and be reborn in the *deva* realms, where they shall

remain for a long while. But at a terrible time in the future, the "last 500 years" when true Dharma is all but lost to mankind, Bhadrapāla and his friends will be reborn on earth. There they will once more rediscover the teachings "entrusted" (*gtad*) to them by the Buddha at the time when he first taught the PraS. Having searched for and recovered from the guardian spirits the teachings they had in a past life sealed in caskets and hidden in *stūpas* and rocks etc., they shall practise them once more, and eventually propagate them among the beings of that "final epoch", for whom they had all along been specially intended by the all-seeing compassionate Buddha. The secondary recipients of the PraS described above will also be reborn into that same time and place, both to serve the rediscoverers, and also to be the principal holders and guardians of their teachings. Finally, a cryptic verse, found only in the Tibetan version, states that eight monks, as well as many "in the North" who rejoice in Dharma, will appear to receive these rediscovered teachings.[20]

The similarity of the Treasure system of the PraS to the Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition is unmistakable. By comparing the various parts of the two systems individually, we can see these similarities more clearly.

a. As we have seen, the PraS has two clearly demarcated groups of disciples with distinct functions. Similarly, the Tibetan *gter-ma* system has an exact parallel in the two categories of disciples who attend the initial teachings given by Padmasambhava: the primary recipients who will become the future *gter-stons*, and the secondary recipients who will be reborn along with them as their *chos-bdag* or "Doctrine-holders", to serve them and become the indispensable principle holders and guardians of the rediscovered teachings. Both *gter-ston* and *chos-bdag* alike should be prophesied in great detail by Padmasambhava.[21]

b. Just like Bhadrapāla and his seven friends in the PraS, the Tibetan *gter-ston* is nearly always a lay *bodhisattva*. Except for a tiny minority who have been monks, a *gter-ston* is normally a householder with consort, children, and possessions.[22] In fact, a female consort is thought to be very important for the *gter-ston*, if he is to function properly as a treasure rediscoverer.

c. Likewise, there exists a similar parallel between the 500 secondary recipients of the PraS, and their rNying-ma-pa counterparts, the *chos-bdag*. As far as I am aware, in both cases their religious status is comparatively immaterial. They can be either lay men or women, or monks or nuns. What counts is their relationship to the Treasure teaching and its discoverer.[23]

d. The rNying-ma-pa system is also extremely similar to the PraS in the manner of the treasure's concealment. As in the PraS, Padmasambhava's students supposedly committed his treasure teachings to writing,[24] and then sealed them in caskets. These caskets

are invariably called *sgrom-bu*, precisely the same term used by the PraS. As in the PraS, the *sgrom-bu* were then supposedly hidden in *stūpas*, in the earth, under rocks, in the mountains, and so on, where *deva* and *nāga* spirits were appointed to guard them.

e. A key technical term in the rNying-ma-pa *gter-ma* system is the word *gtad-rgya*, translated by Tulku Thondup as "mind mandate Transmission". He explains it as follows:

> (*Gtad-rgya*) is the main instrument for the concealing of gTer. The transmission and concealment take place in the essential nature of the mind of a disciple by his power of concentration. The Guru integrates his enlightened mind with the awareness state of the mind of his disciple, and that integration is the absolute transmission and concealment of the teaching. Concealment of symbolic script etc. are supports of transmission.[25]

In the PraS this same technical term occurs, although its meaning is not spelled out: the five hundred secondary recipients urge the Buddha to "entrust" (*gtad*) the PraS to the eight great lay *bodhisattvas*, so they can rediscover it in future lives.

Of course, there is one major difference between the PraS and the Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition: whereas in the PraS the historical Buddha is the originator of the Treasure teachings, in the tantric rNying-ma-pa system it is the historical Padmasambhava and, less frequently, a few other gurus of his time, who are the originators of the Treasure teachings. But the Tibetans justify the substitution of Padmasambhava for the Buddha because of their notion that Padmasambhava, as a realised tantric guru, is himself a fully enlightened Buddha, a *nirmāṇakāya* of Amitābha, Śākyamuni, and others.[26] Thus they maintain a formal equivalence to the system described in the PraS.

A paradoxical consequence of the existence of such scriptures as the PraS, is that a potential for tension is created between a form of religious orthodoxy and a form of textual orthodoxy. Textually, the PraS, with its decidedly Madhyamaka slant, is without question considered valid scripture by all Mahāyāna schools; yet religiously, its teachings on how systematically to reveal new scriptures are potentially subversive of another strand in Buddhist thinking, which understands orthodoxy as the strict preservation of a received scriptural canon. Within Tibetan Buddhism, two characteristic responses to this dilemma are instantiated by the dGe-lugs-pa and rNying-ma-pa schools respectively. The dGe-lugs-pa inspiration is to value consolidation of existing scriptures and doctrinal stability more highly than fresh scriptural production. As I understand it, they therefore take the view that meditational standards have declined so radically in recent centuries, that no new important scriptural production could reasonably be expected anymore; hence the teachings of the PraS are considered mainly

to apply to a previous age, rather than our own. Thus they favour what one might loosely call a "closed canon". The rNying-ma-pa, on the other hand, value fresh scriptural production so highly that they feel quite prepared to undertake its risks. However, to reduce the dangers of destabilisation, they have developed an elaborate system of checks and balances. They apply, for example, the category "False Treasure" (*gter-rdzun*) for purported treasure productions that are not adequately in accord with the established tradition. These can thus be easily rejected, usually by being identified as the effects of specific demonic forces attempting to mislead people by masquerading as genuine revelations.[27]

It is very well known that differing attitudes to ongoing revelation became an important cause of conflict throughout most of Tibetan Buddhist history, with some authorities rejecting fresh revelations as fraudulent, and others accepting them as valid. But it should not be forgotten that this kind of tension seems to be inherent to Mahāyāna Buddhism itself, and not by any means restricted to Tibet. In China, for example, an important text for Far-Eastern Buddhism called the *Kuan-ting ching* (Book of Consecration; T 1331), was produced by means of the treasure system in fifth-century Chiang-nan, during the Six Dynasties period, that is, seven centuries before the first appearence of *gter-ma* in Tibet. The Consecration sūtra is quite explicit about its claimed origins as a treasure, describing at length its initial teaching by the historical Buddha, its subsequent concealment, and its eventual recovery from a grotto, where it had been hidden in a jeweled casket, written in letters of purple and gold upon sandalwood tablets. But this process was clearly controversial, since the Consecration sūtra also has a lot to say about the fierce opposition its revelation will arouse among conservative monks. As it happened, the revealer of the Consecration sūtra, probably a monk called Hui-chien, was able to see his revelation gain the canonical status which it still enjoys, because in his day the political and religious climate was favourable to fresh scriptural revelation. But in other historical periods less fortunate revealers of scripture could find themselves severely condemned as charlatans and rebels, and even the Consecration sūtra only managed to retain its canonical status by rapidly acquiring a false identity in the traditional bibliographies as a text translated from Sanskrit.[28] Clearly, Chinese Buddhism suffered from a similar type of ambivalence and conflict regarding its apocrypha as did Tibetan Buddhism. There is also, of course, plentiful eveidence that Indian Buddhism suffered from tremendous tensions concerning the revelation of fresh scripture. Given that nearly all Mahāyāna and Tantric Buddhist scripture, and even the *Abhidharma*, can be seen as apocryphal from the early Buddhist point of view, often claiming to be the utterances of the historical Buddha even when this clearly was not the case, such tensions were a fundamental feature of Indian Buddhism from an early period.

Nidhi

The second topic to be examined in this paper is the tantric cult, both Hindu and Buddhist, of finding hidden treasures, usually material, called *nidhi* in Sanskrit. Within Buddhism, this cult was more prominent among the earlier *kriyā-tantra* texts than among the later *tantras*, a fact which lends support to the traditional claim that Padmasambhava was concerned with *nidhi*. It seems that elements of the *nidhi* tradition combined with the Mahāyāna traditions described above, in the formation of the Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition; for not only is the Tibetan word *gter-ma* a direct translation of the Sanskrit word *nidhi*, but the Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition also resembles the Indian *nidhi* tradition in several important respects. For example, it includes under the rubric of *gter-ma* material treasures as well as sacred texts. Likewise, it shares a central characteristic of the Indian tantric cult in placing a heavy emphasis on the role of fierce treasure protectors such as *nāga* and *yakṣa* spirits. Furthermore, it also incorporates the Indian tantric idea of treasures being repeatedly recoverable from the same special magically-endowed sites (*śrī-mukha* or *gter-kha*).

In the Hindu tantric and magical traditions discovery of *nidhi* has its own distinctive lore. It comprises a special set of rituals in its own right, and is not simply subsumed under the rubric of such standard categories as *ākarṣaṇa*, the attracting of women or wealth. On the contrary, *nidhidarśana* or *nidhānalābha*, "finding a hidden treasure", is listed in the Hindu tantric and magical compositions as a distinct and independent category.[29] Hence at least one entire text devoted to the subject survives in Sanskrit, the *Nidhidarśana*, or "Discovery of Treasure", by Rāma Vājapeyin.[30] Finding treasure is also of course referred to in a host of other texts, ranging from the *Mahābhārata* to the *Jayadrathayāmala* and including the *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*, the *Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭāṇi*, the *Śaktisaṃgama Tantra*, the *Siddhanāgārjunakakṣapuṭa* and the *Kāmaratna*.[31] Many such texts give entire *sādhana* rites for the finding of treasure; for example, the third *ṣaṭka* of the *Jayadrathayāmala* has a *pātālasiddhi* chapter in the section on the *sādhana* of the goddess Ghoraghoratarā Kālī, which deals with *sādhana* at caves (*bila-*), the best of which are called *śrī-mukha*, and by means of which one can attain *pātāla*, the subterranean paradise of *nāgas* and *asuras*, where treasure could be obtained.[32]

In such Hindu texts, the treasures were usually said to be guarded by fierce *nāga* spirits, but sometimes a *yakṣinī* or some other very dangerous spirit is mentioned instead. Thus it was believed that only an accomplished *siddha*, or those with the support of an accomplished *siddha*, could ever procure such treasures, since the treasure guardians would harm or even kill a merely ordinary human being who had the temerity to attempt to take out the treasure they guarded. Hence the rituals to extract the treasure

were quite complex. They included rites to find out where the treasure was; for example, a *siddha* might propitiate the Śaiva godess Nidhīśvarī, "Mistress of Treasure", said to be the wealth-god Kubera's mother, because it was believed that she would grant a vision of where the treasure was hidden. Then the treasure seeker also needed very powerful rites to protect himself from the treasure protectors, and various ointments to make the treasure become visible.[33]

The treasure was often believed to be located at a special site sometimes known as a *śrī-mukha*, or "treasure face", which, it was thought, could be visited repeatedly by many different *siddha* treasure-seekers over a long period of time and still yield up treasure for all of them; in other words, the source was considered supernatural and thus not exhausted as a commonplace supply of treasure would be. The treasure itself was usually said to consist of magical elixirs and gold, and it was usually stated that a proportion at least of money thus discovered had to be used for directly religious purposes.[34]

Early Buddhist *tantras*, and, as we shall see, the Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition, include much of the same type of belief as the Hindu system. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (henceforth MMK) is the Buddhist *kriyā-tantra* best known to Western scholars because a Sanskrit version of it has survived. In this text (and many other *kriyā-tantra* texts like it) we find a good deal of material on the recovery of *nidhi*, including such topics as the summoning of *nāga* or *yakṣa* spirits, or Gaṇapati, to allow one to see the treasure; and frequent refences to "asura's caves", a favoured Buddhist term equivalent to the Hindu *pātāla*. Like their Hindu counterparts, in the Buddhist tradition these *asura* caves are the sites where yogins can obtain every kind of desirable goal, over and above treasures, ranging from complete immortality and occult knowledge to sensual pleasures. We also find in the MMK, as in the Hindu texts, an injunction that half of the wealth recovered as *nidhi* must be spent on the Three Jewels. Sometimes the MMK insists that the treasure seeker has to begin his search during eclipses, with the recitation of mantras.[35] But good astrological moments are not always necessary; in another early Indian Buddhist *kriyā-tantra*, the *Kani-krodha-vajrakumāra-bodhisattva-sādhanā-vidhi* (now preserved only in Chinese), we find the following description of a ritual to find *nidhi*:

> There is also a rite for those who desire to acquire treasure (*nidhi*). Do not select a particular [astrological] season, day or hour, and it is not necessary to maintain the discipline. In the vicinity of the treasure, the mantrin should raise one foot and recite the mantra. Turning around to the right, he should gaze towards all of the four directions and take possession of the area (*sīma-bandha*). Carefully raising one foot, he should recite the mantra one hundred and eight times. If the guardians of the treasure obstruct him, then they will be burnt in a mass of fire. They will come screaming to the mantrin and bow

> before him vanquished. The mantrin should say to them, "Open this treasure store and give all that is herein to me!". They will then open it and give everything to the mantrin. If they are mean-spirited and do not give it to him, then he should say, "Brahmā, Nārāyaṇa, Maheśvara, the warrior goddesses and **** will come and crush your treasure store. You give it to me quickly! If you do not do so, the wrathful Vajrakumāra will destroy all of your family!". When they have heard what he said, they will all obey and say to him, "Noble One! Come and take what you will, we shall not hinder you!". Then he should say to them, "You may open the store yourselves and give it to me!". They will then immediately open the treasure-store and give him [the treasure] respectfully.[36]

The following is also from the same text:

> There is another rite if you desire to locate hidden treasure. Get some yoghurt from a yellow cow, a snake skin, and some shark-oil, as well as some arka wood and cotton. Make a lamp with these things. Recite mantras to empower it, and then light it at night near the place where there is treasure. You will know the amount of treasure that is there by the size of the flame. If you need to expel the gods who guard the treasure and other obstructors, take a slab of rock or a pebble or some mustard seeds or some empowered water and cast it at the treasure. The obstructor on the treasure will withdraw. If you suspect that there is a large *nāga* there, this will also leave.[37]

It seems that in the Hindu and Buddhist tantric traditions alike, *nidhi* was predominantly seen as material wealth, a category in which magical elixirs are included. But in some of the more exoteric strata of Vedic or Hindu literature, the words *nidhi* (treasure) and *nidhipa* (treasure protector) carried a slightly different nuance. From citations in the *Kauśikasūtra* and the *Gṛhyasūtras*, Jan Gonda believes that *nidhi* here refers to something of spiritual value deposited in a spiritual realm. This was guarded by protectors called *nidhipa*, whose function was to ensure that only those who had deposited the *nidhi* in the first place, or those for whom it was intended, could eventually reclaim it, when they eventually arrived in the spiritual realm in person. Agni, Prajāpati, or Bṛhaspati would often act as "keepers of the deposits".[38] This classical use of *nidhi* to mean spiritual treasure does not seem to be entirely lost in the tantric tradition, since the material treasures discovered there retain at least a spiritual connection – some or all of the wealth must go to spiritual purposes, and consumption of the sacred elixirs is inherently spiritual. But despite a reasonable search, I have been unable to find any Indian tantric reference to the use of the term *nidhi* to mean a scriptural or textual discovery, as it so frequently does in the rNying-ma-pa system.

Nevertheless the similarities between the Indic material mentioned above and the Tibetan *gter-ma* tradition are clear.

a. Like the Indian tantric cult, the Tibetan tradition includes under the rubric of *gter-ma* the discovery of wealth, sacred elixirs, and valuable objects, just as much as the recovery of religious texts and scriptures. For example, Padma Gling-pa was offered a skullful of gold by the treasure-protector (*gter-srung*) Khari, who also promised to gradually give him all the wealth of the local rulers of Tibet.[39] Likewise, Dudjom Rinpoche lists many longevity pills, jewels, flasks of the "waters of life", images, relics, and other valuable objects that were discovered by various *gter-stons*.[40] Dodrupchen III echoes the Indian tantric tradition's emphasis on elixirs when he writes that, "according to some interpretations, the *amṛta* rendering liberation by tasting is praised as the best among the Terma substances".[41] All these various types of material treasures seem to be quite as widespread as the scriptural treasures. Both equally go by the name of *gter-ma*.

b. Like their Indian tantric antecedents, Tibetan *gter-stons* constantly revisited the same treasure sites, from which many generations of treasure-finders spanning many centuries could recover treasures. These were called *gter-gnas*, "treasure places", or *gter-kha*, literally "treasure faces", i.e. "treasure sites", and often were situated at very dangerous or inaccessible places. Within the *gter-kha* would be a *gter-sgo* or "treasure door", a miraculous door in the rock which only the appointed *gter-ston* could open and within which he would find the casket (*sgrom-bu*) containing the treasure. After the treasure was removed, the door would miraculously be resealed, leaving only a mark on the rock. This complex of *gter-kha* and *gter-sgo* seems very similar indeed to the Sanskrit notion of *śrī-mukha*; indeed, *gter-kha* is probably a direct Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit technical term.

c. The ambivalent nature of the guardian spirits of the treasures is again common to both traditions. In the Indian *nidhi* tradition and in the Tibetan *gter-ma* system alike, these guardians are extremely dangerous, despite the useful function they carry out. In his study of Padma Gling-pa, Michael Aris graphically describes the dire calamities thought to have befallen both humans and animals as a result of offending the *gter-ma* keepers (*gter-bdag*), whether unwittingly or not; all of which underscores the importance of constantly placating them.[42] Dodrupchen III states this ambivalent nature of the treasure-guardians very clearly. He points out that many of the treasure-guardians were deliberately selected and appointed by Padmasambhava from among the chiefs of the various classes of evil demons opposed to Buddhism. The idea is the recurring tantric theme of controlling evil spirits: "by appointing their chiefs as [*gter-ma*] protectors, the subjects won't be able to transgress their orders".[43]

We can see from the above that some of the aspects of the rNying-ma-pa *gter-ma* tradition which are not derivable from the teachings of such Mahāyāna sūtra scriptures as the PraS, are derivable from early Buddhist *tantras* of the *kriyā* class. (Of course, there are also other elements, such as the role of *ḍākinīs*, taken from *mahāyoga* tantric sources, that are not analysed at all in this paper). Yet on closer analysis, much of the *kriyā* tantric material is essentially an expansion of aspects of the sūtra material, for the PraS already includes such topics as *nāga* and *deva* spirits who guard the treasures, and rocks and mountains in which they guard them. Thus it is clear that the most important basic structuring concepts of the *gter-ma* tradition come from the sūtra rather than the *tantra* tradition; it is only in the area of certain practical details of concealment and retrieval, and in the idea of material treasures and elixirs being discovered, that elements are derived from the early tantric sources.

In conclusion, we can see that it might well be mistaken to regard the *gter-ma* and *dag-snang* systems as syncretic, or essentially indigenous to Tibet. On the contrary, it seems that these traditions constitute a predominantly Buddhist development of Indian Buddhist ideas, albeit carried out on Tibetan soil. Even the visionary journeys to receive teachings (for example directly from Padmasambhava in his paradise, or from the deities at Bodnath in Nepal), experienced so often by *gter-stons* such as Padma-Gling-pa and others, and seen by some Western scholars as strong evidence of a non-Buddhist shamanism,[44] to my mind more probably carry a quite different connotation. Although, admittedly, we do have evidence of shamanistic journeys in non-Buddhist Tibetan religion,[45] such journeys are also central to the Pure Vision tradition as described in classic Mahāyāna sources. Thus it would seem more likely that the visionary journeys of Padma Gling-pa and others are simply an emulation of the magical journeys of scriptural revelation made by exemplary Indian Buddhists such as Nāgārjuna, revealer of the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures, and Asaṅga, revealer of the famous teachings attributed to the Buddha Maitreya.

The prevailing Western academic view of *gter-ma* has so far tried to understand it predominantly in terms of the historical conditions influencing its first appearence in 11th century Tibet. Hence it is seen largely in terms of a response by the followers of the Old Tantras, to the challenge posed by the arrival in Tibet and translation of the New Tantras.[46] While not intending to take issue with this view, I think that such a sociological perspective can fruitfully be broadened by a textual consideration of the degree of fidelity that the actual methods of *gter-ma* production bear to the much older mainstream scriptural traditions. Such data tends to confirm the views of anthropologists such as Maurice Bloch that the nature of ritual is extremely slow-changing; and of Stanley Tanbiah that the possession of a detailed written scriptural corpus can confer on a tradition the power of constant or repeated regeneration to a very precise template over very long

periods of time. Indeed, it seems possible that in observing the highly systematic workings of contemporary Tibetan scripture-revealers, we might in fact be observing a unique survival, or at least a close replica, of the workings of the revealers of many of the most famous Indian and Chinese Buddhist scriptures of the last two millennia. As a growing number of scholars have remarked in recent years, a close study of both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist apocrypha might well yield a useful contribution towards an understanding of the development of Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism in India.

Notes

1. An earlier less complete version of this research was presented at the 6th IATS Conference, Fagernes, 1992. Thanks to Prof. Per Kvaerne for permission to publish the updated version here. I would also like to acknowledge the considerable help of Alexis Sanderson, Janet Gyatso and Stephen Hodge in giving me valuable references and other forms of help, and of Cathy Cantwell, Mike Hookham and Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche in critically reading the early drafts.
2. See the careful attention paid to this text in Williams, 1989.
3. Harrison, 1990, p. xvii.
4. *Ibid.*, p. vii.
5. Harrison, 1978, p. xi.
6. Harrison, 1990, p. xxv.
7. *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Snellgrove, 1987, p. 430.
10. Harrison, 1990, pp. xxi, 54–60, 100, 104.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–44.
12. Williams, 1989, p. 30.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
14. Thondup, 1990, p. 157. See also Thondup, 1986, pp. 90–91.
15. Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991, pp. 747–8.
16. Chang, 1983, pp. 200–201, 216–8. The teachings of this sūtra seem to adumbrate the rDzogs-chen practice of *thod-rgal.*
17. The Tibetan defenders of the *gter-ma* tradition regularly cite a substantial number of scriptures from which they derive legitimation. Although the PraS is often mentioned, for example in Sog-bzlog-pa's *bKa'-thang yid-kyi mun-sel*, or in Guru Bkra-shis' history, or in Thondup, 1986, p. 109, such traditional apologists seem to give no special weight to the PraS. It would be an interesting exercise to study the entire range of these citations in detail; several of them seem to describe the same kind of scenario found in the PraS. Thanks to Dan Martin for these references.
18. *Ṣoḍaśa satpuruṣāḥ*. See Harrison, 1990, p. 6.
19. See Harrison, 1990, p. 96, n2. He shows good reasons why the text must originally have given 40 years, despite the fact that the surviving Tibetan version gives 4,000 years.
20. See Harrison, 1990, p. 104, n14. The Tibetan text reads *byang-phyogs-su*, possibly from an unusual Sanskrit formation with a different meaning.
21. For a discussion of the *chos-bdag*, see the explanation of Dodrupchen III, in Thondup, 1986, p. 162. This author was the third reincarnation of the *chos-bdag* of 'Jigs-med gling-pa.
22. Thondup,1986, p. 82.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
24. Often, the writing is in an extremely condensed symbolic or code form, designed to awaken within the *gter-ston* a memory of the teaching imprinted on his mind in his past life.
25. Thondup, 1986, p. 236
26. See Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991, p. 746.

27. Evil ministers of Padmasambhava's time made evil aspirations to confound the true *gter-ma* and mislead future generations with false treasure-teachings. See Thondup, 1986, pp. 154–6.
28. Strickmann, 1990, pp. 75–115. Thanks to Janet Gyatso for drawing my attention to this valuable source.
29. Goudriaan, 1978, pp. 294,307.
30. Goudriaan and Gupta, 1981, p. 124.
31. Goudriaan, 1978, p. 307.
32. Thanks to Alexis Sanderson for this information.
33. Thanks to Alexis Sanderson for much of this information.
34. This summary of the Hindu cult of *nidhi* is based on Goudriaan and Gupta 1981 (*op.cit.*), Goudriaan 1978 (*op.cit.*), and additional information very kindly given to me by Alexis Sanderson from his own notes.
35. Thanks to Alexis Sanderson for much of this information.
36. From an unpublished partial translation very generously made for me by Stephen Hodge.
37. Stephen Hodge *ibid.*
38. Gonda, 1965, pp. 183–193.
39. Aris, 1989, pp. 57–8.
40. Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991, (vol.II), pp. 319–327.
41. Thondup, 1986, p. 152.
42. Aris, 1989, p. 44.
43. Thondup, 1986, p. 114.
44. Aris, 1989, pp. 53–63.
45. Of course, it remains highly debatable as to what extent the so-called Tibetan "folk" traditions (such as the dpa'-bo etc) are really non-Buddhist.
46. Snellgrove, 1987, p. 397.

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Freeing the Tīyyas: Nārāyaṇa Guru and Religious Ideology in Kēraḷa

Theodore Gabriel

"One caste, one religion, one God for humanity". With this striking aphorism as his motto Nārāyaṇa Guru led a movement which had far-reaching consequences in the religious and social spheres, not only of Kēraḷa but of the whole of India. But first to set the background more clearly. Kēraḷa is one of the smaller states in the South-Western region of the Republic of India. It has a population of about 29 million, half of whom are Hindus, the remaining half being equally divided between the Christian and the Muslim communities. In earlier times Kēraḷa had been, according to historians, a much larger region, extending from the 15th parallel (roughly the location of Goa) to the cape and ruled over by a Perumāḷ (emperor) from the town of Musiris (Koduṅṅallūṟ). But gradually invaders appropriated the northern regions until, in more recent times, Kēraḷa came to be distinctly divided into four principalities, commencing from the northern river Nēṭravati to Cape Kanyākumāri. The northern-most regions, which were ruled by the emperor known as the Northern Kōlattiri and the Sāmūtiri (the Zamorin), were, in 1766, invaded and subjugated by Mysorean Muslim rulers Haidar Ali and Tippu Sultan, while Cochin (Kochi) and Travancore (Tiruvitāṅkūr) retained their independence in spite of attempts by Tippu Sultan to invade these territories also. Later the northern regions of Kēraḷa were ceded to the British by Tippu Sultan under the treaty of Srīrangapaṭṭaṇam in 1792. After the British took over the administration of the northern regions they came to be called Malabar, a district of the Madras Presidency, and the Cochin and Travancore principalities continued to be ruled by Maharajas under the aegis of the British empire. In 1957 when the Indian states were reorganised on a linguistic basis, the three regions consolidated to form the Malayalam speaking state of Kēraḷa. Kēraḷa is bordered on the west by the Arabian Sea and on the East by the mountain ranges known as Sahyāḍri

(the Western Ghats), which rise to an altitude of 9,000 feet. Kēraḷa is perhaps well-known to the Western world for three things: its ancient trade with the Middle East in spices, the first century church of the St Thomas Christians, and Śaṅkara, the great Hindu theologian.

Kēraḷa has a highly diverse and divisive caste system. Vivēkānanda called the province the "the mad house of caste" in India. Especially severe were the rules of pollution. Specific distances were prescribed between various castes. A breach of these rules would result in the higher caste individual being deemed as polluted by the lower caste one, who would then be chastised in draconian fashion. For example, a Pulaya (one of the lowest of the untouchables) should keep a distance of 96 feet from a Brahmin. Otherwise he would be put to death. A Tīyya (a higher untouchable) should stand 36 feet away from a Brahmin, and 12 feet away from a *śūdra*, failing which he would be severely beaten. Amazingly the concept of ritual pollution extended even to different categories of untouchables. A Pulaya, for instance, should keep away from a Tīyya to a distance of at least 90 feet. It was believed that salvation was assured for those who meted out instant punishment – death or beating – to offenders. On major roads and temple roads notices were posted banning the *avarṇas* from using them. One could pollute a caste Hindu merely by passing near a tank where he was bathing or by plucking coconuts from a tree under which he passed. When the Nampūtiris (high caste Brahmins) travelled, Nāyars used to run in front shouting to warn low caste Hindus and untouchables of the approaching Brahmin, enabling them to leave the road and hide behind trees. Untouchables were also required to pay various special taxes including a head tax and a breast tax. Altogether about one hundred special taxes were levied from the untouchables. The lower categories of untouchables were virtually slaves and worked on the land with no remuneration except some rice for subsistence. They could also be sold and exchanged among their high caste masters. It was only in 1854 that the British Presidency in Madras ordered the Rajahs of Travancore and Cochin to end this kind of slavery and free all the untouchables. About 130,000 in Travancore and 40,000 in Cochin were freed.[1] Still other discriminatory practices continued unabated.

Nārāyaṇa Guru was born into the Tīyya caste in 1856 in the town of Cempazanthi, about 8 miles north of Trivandrum (Tiruvanantapuram), the capital of Kēraḷa. The Tīyyas are also known as Ēṛavas and in some places as Cōgas (Cēvakan or warrior). They are believed to be migrants from the northern part of Sri Lanka known as Ēṛam from which the ethnic name Ēṛava is derived. The term Tīyya, by which the caste is mainly known in Malabar, is believed to be a corruption of the Sanskritic term *dvīp* meaning Island. Both names testify to the fact that the Ēṛavas and Tīyyas are migrants from Sri Lanka. Some scholars, however, opine that while there was certainly intermixing with the Sri Lankan migrants, there is also

an indigenous element in the Tīyya community, and actually state that the Ēṛavas are the earliest inhabitants of Kēraḷa. They are also believed to have been Buddhists, and Buddhism might have been the factor which led to the linking of the Sri Lankan and the indigenous Ēṛavas.

There is considerable archaeological and numismatic evidence for the widespread prevalence of Buddhism in Kēraḷa. In the Buddhist chronicle *Mahāvaṃsa* it is mentioned that king Asoka sent the monk Raksitadhīra to Kēraḷa for preaching Buddhism.[2] He is believed to have converted 60,000 in Kēraḷa and established 500 *vihāras*. It is opined by scholars that most of the major temples of Kēraḷa had been Buddhist *vihāras* up to the 7th century CE. The architecture and the structure of temples testify to this fact. The 7th century Chinese traveller Hsuan Tsang comments on the numerous *vihāras* in Malakūṭṭa (Malabar).[3] The avilokitēśvara bodhisattva dharma sāsta is believed to be the God Cāttan who became a popular deity of the Tīyyas. The Śāsta of Śabarimala, the most popular pilgrimage centre in Kēraḷa, may also have been originally the same bodhisattva. According to C. V. Kunhiraman the Tīyya festivals of Kutirakeṭṭū, Tālappoli and Āṛat are modelled very closely on Buddhist festivals.[4] The temple of the most popular goddess of Kēraḷa, the Koduṅṅallūṛ Bhagavati, is said to have its origins in a convent established by a famous Buddhist nun, Karnaki, in CE 120. Professor K. G. Narayanan believes that the transition of Malayalam into a distinct language from Dṛamila was due to the infusion of Pāli words into the language of Kēraḷa.[5] The most striking evidence comes from the pilgrimage to Śabarimala. The observance of vows of non-violence, vegetarianism and sexual abstinence, and particularly the cry of '*śaraṇam*' (refuge) which the pilgrims call out continually are evocative of Buddhism. Untouchability was always totally absent in this great temple. It is believed that Buddhism reigned supreme in Kēraḷa for a thousand years from the third century BCE. The combined onslaught by the Kēraḷan emperor Kulaśēkhara Perumāḷ and the great Hindu theologian Śaṅkara is believed to have led to the decline of the Buddhist faith in Kēraḷa. Legend states that Śaṅkara challenged the Buddhist monks to a theological debate which they lost, and the tongues of the defeated debaters were cut off. However, the authenticity of this event is doubtful. As a matter of fact, the rise of Brahminism in Kēraḷa led to the total destruction of previous historical records pertaining to Buddhism, making it very difficult for scholars to reconstruct the history of the period. At this time there was a great influx of Aryans from the north via Tuḷunād who gradually came to dominate the religious scene and gained political power among the rulers by performing *yāgas* believed by the kings to be beneficial to themselves. The Buddhists who adopted Hinduism became Nāyars, a *śūdra* caste, who allowed the Brahmins to take their girls in concubinage. The Buddhists who remained independent both religiously and socially were categorised as untouchables and became the Tīyyas. The continued tradition of great

Sanskrit scholars and Ayurvedic physicians among the Tīyyas in spite of the pollution concepts and discriminatory practices to which they were subjected is evidence of the Tīyyas having been Buddhists and a prominent group in no way inferior to the rest of society in those more egalitarian days. The Brahmins composed works such as the *Śaṅkarasmṛti* and *Jetinirṇaya* in order to strengthen the nascent caste system. By the 9th century the very complex caste system of Kēraḷa was well entrenched.

The *avarṇas* such as the Tīyyas were not allowed to worship the major gods of Hinduism, for example Viṣṇu and Śiva. They had their own pantheon of gods who are considered inferior to the Hindu gods and virtually categorised as devils. Gods such as Cāttan, Cāmundi, Karinkāli, and Kālamāṭan are now considered to be evil beings, forms of Asura rather than Sura. Some of these names even degenerate into terms of abuse in the Malayalam language. The Tīyyas and lower castes were not allowed to offer *bhasma* (sacred ash), milk or ghee. Their offerings were mainly palm toddy and blood of chicken. They were not allowed to use Sanskrit in their rituals. According to K. Vivēkānandan there was a saying, no doubt among the *savarṇas*, that *madya* (liquor), *māṃsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (female organ) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse) were their ways to salvation.[6]

Nārāyaṇa Guru was born when discriminatory practices were at their zenith in Kēraḷa. Right from his childhood he reflected on and protested against the oppression of the untouchables. It is said that he used to play with boys of the Pulaya caste, the lowest of the lowest, and even touch them. When his mother and other elders scolded him about this he used to argue with them. He neither observed superiority over castes lower than the Tīyyas nor acted with deference before castes higher than them. He was said to be honest, devout and of a thoughtful disposition. He showed considerable brilliance at an early age and mastered Sanskrit and Tamil. He also displayed talent as a poet and writer. He has written about 60 compositions, in Malayalam,Tamil, and Sanskrit, mostly in verse. He worked as a teacher for some time, teaching not only Tīyya children but also those of lower castes. Since they were not admitted to the Tīyya school he used to visit them in their homes and give them personal coaching, much to the dismay of his caste peers as well as the Brahmins and *śūdras*.

Gradually Nārāyaṇa Guru felt discontent with his life and decided upon total renunciation. He went to Marutvamala, a thickly wooded hill near the town of Nāgerkōvil and spent a number of days in total isolation and meditation. However, his fame as a *yōgi* spread, and he attracted a number of visitors and disciples. He established an *āśram* in Aruvippuṛam where he also built a temple and consecrated a Śiva *linga.* The Brahmins were greatly agitated at this intrusion into their privileges and questioned him on what authority he had consecrated a Śiva *mūrti.* The Guru replied "I have installed an Ēṛava Śiva not a Brahmin Śiva." The Aruvippuṛam sanctuary became a famous centre for the dissemination of Nārāyaṇa Guru's social

and religious ideology. It was visited by many distinguished visitors including Tagore and Gandhi. At Śivagiri in 1903 a *saṅgha* echoing the egalitarianism of the Buddhist term was formed for the welfare of the untouchables. This is the Srī Nārāyaṇa Dharma Paripālana Sangham (The association for the preservation of Sri Nārāyaṇa Guru's *dharma*, popularly known as S.N.D.P.) which has become a major force in Kēraḷan Society today.

In spite of his obvious mystical nature and attachment to Advaitic theology, Nārāyaṇa Guru often seemed pragmatic and rationalistic in his pronouncements. For instance, when his devotees desired to make his Śivagiri *āśram* a centre of pilgrimage in the model of the great pilgrimage centres of India, the Guru was initially quite against the proposal. He was not in favour of the ostentation and needless expenditure associated with most Hindu pilgrimages and festivals. Finally he relented but made some strict stipulations regarding the conduct of the pilgrimage. He chose the Christian new year's day, first of January, as the pilgrimage day. Only ten days' vows were to be observed by the pilgrims so as not to hamper their normal work. These were based on Buddha's *pañca śuddi* – cleanliness in person, food, mind, speech and action – from the eightfold Ārya path. Any extravagance was totally banned. Even the garments prescribed for wearing on the pilgrimage were to be dyed yellow in turmeric so that they could be whitened by washing in water and used again in normal life. Conferences were to be organised as part of the pilgrimage celebrations led by experts on various secular subjects such as education, hygiene, co-operation, agriculture, commerce, handicraft and other themes useful for the community's upliftment. He said that the main objective of the pilgrimage should be the advancement of the people and the nation. He knew that the Tīyyas and other *avarṇas* were extremely backward educationally and economically. He always exhorted them to be thrifty, and not to waste even a single pie. Once a disciple asked him " Is it better to cremate the dead or bury them?" The Guru replied "grind them in a mill and use as fertiliser". Seeing the disciple's shocked expression the Guru asked, "Why? Will it pain them?" Smiling, the Guru said, "observe ten days' prayer for the dead. Do not spend more than ten rupees during the ten days." The Guru was thinking of the high expenditure usually involved in Hindu cyclical rituals for the dead. Once his favourite disciple Kumāran Āśān, the famous poet, was about to conduct a *tilaka havan*, a funerary rite. The Guru asked him, "Do you believe in reincarnation?" The poet replied in the affirmative. The Guru said, "The soul is reborn as soon as it dies. Then for whose benefit are you conducting this ceremony?".[7]

Nārāyaṇa Guru's ideology will now be examined under three headings, namely caste, religion and God. I have already given some indication of his world view and his stance on these categories. The following will look into more detail at his views under these three headings.

Caste

Nārāyaṇa Guru's objectives regarding the caste problem extended beyond discontinuing discriminatory practices. He wanted a total eradication of the concept of caste from human minds. In this he differed from Mahātma Gandhi who was not opposed to the caste system as such, and believed in *varṇāśramadharma*, though he was opposed to caste-based discrimination and worked hard for the upliftment of the untouchables. Nārāyaṇa Guru said: "Do not ask about caste, think about caste, speak about caste". In India people are very conscious, even inquisitive about a person's caste and religious identity. The Guru worked towards an ideal which would eradicate the very concept of caste from society. In his poem *Nirvṛtipancakam* he states:

> *Kō nāma dēsa: kā jāti:*
>
> *Pravṛitti: kā kiya dwaya*
>
> *Ityādi vādōparātiṛ-*
>
> *Yasya tasyaiva nirvṛiti:*[8]
>
> (*Nirvṛiti* i.e. *mokṣa* is attainable only by one who transcends divisive contentions such as caste, nationality, and occupation.)

In his poem *Jātinirṇayam* he wrote:

> *Manuṣyāṇām manuṣyatvam*
>
> *Jātiṛ, gōtvam gavam yadhā*
>
> *Nā Brāḥmaṇādirasyaivam*
>
> *Hā, tatvam vettṛi kōpi na*
>
> (*Jātinirṇayam* verse 1) [9]
>
> Human beings belong to the human caste, just as all cows belong to the bovine caste. Brahmins etc. are not the caste of human beings. Alas! No one realises this truth.

According to him all human beings belonged to one caste – the human species. In Madras he told some visitors:

> When one dog sees another it immediately recognises it as a dog. All animals have this faculty of recognising their own species. Only human beings have doubts. They cannot recognise their own species. They are worse than animals![10]

Caste, however, was a difficult issue to tackle. As we know, it is underwritten by many of the teachings and scriptures of Hinduism. The mythology of the *Puruṣa Sūkta*, and *Dharma Śāstras* such as the *Manusmṛti* support caste. Manu stipulated that to carry out the duties of another caste is *adharma*, sin. In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rama beheads Śambhuka, a *śūdra* who dared

to perform *tapas* and was said to have caused the death of Brahmins by this blasphemous act. The karma doctrine justifies the low status of *śūdras* and untouchables. The Guru quoted from the Asṛi Samhita:

> *Janmanā jayate śūdra*
>
> *Saṃskāra ryṛ dwija ucyate* [11]
>
> All are born as *śūdras*. It is through *saṃskāra* (self improvement) that one attains Brahminhood.

The Guru was well aware of what he was up against. He used to cite the instance of Viśwāmiṭra. Though through intense *tapas* he acquired enough spiritual power to create a new heaven, Vasiśṭa refused to recognise him as a Brahmin. The Guru remarked that if it was so difficult for a *kśatṛiya*, who is only one inch away, figuratively speaking, from a Brahmin, how much more arduous would it be for an untouchable or a *śūdra* who is so far removed, to be recognised as equal to a Brahmin! In Kēraḷa Brahmins were considered to be the visible gods. The respect and deference meted out to them was unparalleled elsewhere in India. K. G. Narayanan states that to legitimise their hegemony they created the legend of Paraśurāma raising Kēraḷa from the sea by throwing his axe from Sahyādṛi (the Western Ghats) and then distributing the land reclaimed to 64 Brahmin families. Until recent times most of the landowners in Kēraḷa were Nampūtiris, and the *śūdras* and Tīyyas their tenants. The Brahmins instituted the rigid and severe rules of social intercourse which were heavily weighed on the side of their social and economic advantage.

Nārāyaṇa Guru's Vedāntic ideology was helpful for the eradication of caste. He taught his followers that he could see the primal soul form, the Brahman in every one, and not caste differences. In his poem *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* he comments on this ontological identity:

> *Avanivarennariyunnatokke ōrthāl*
>
> *Avaniyilādimamāyorātma rūpam*
>
> (*Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* 24)[12]
>
> That we know as me and he are, if we reflect, the primal soul form of the world.

According to him there was only one caste – the human caste. To refute that Hindu mythology invariably supported the caste system, he pointed to the instance of the sage Parāśara muni who was born to an untouchable mother, and Pākkanāṛ and the Peruntaccan and ten others of Kēraḷa mythology, who were avatars of Viṣṇu born to a Pariah woman. According to the *Mahābhārata* the illustrious Bharata dynasty descends from a woman of the fisherman caste. On the first temple he consecrated the Guru inscribed in his own hand: "This is a place where everyone lives in brotherhood without caste differences or religious animosity."

One visitor argued:

> People gain more skill if there is occupational specialisation over the generations from father to son. The caste system reduces competition and ensures employment for all.

The Guru replied:

> The person who is preoccupied with just one kind of work, without interest in any other will not be able to do anything properly. Moreover the caste system does not take into account individual talents and preferences. The son may not like the father's trade. This is not good for any profession.[13]

Rajagopalachari, the first Governor General of independent India and a Brahmin scholar, during a visit to the Guru's *āśram* remarked that caste was a natural phenomenon and that he could identify anyone's caste merely by looking at them and listening to their accent. The Guru paraded some inmates of the *āśram* before the distinguished visitor and asked them to recite some verses from the scriptures. He then asked Rājāji to identify their caste. Āchāri made so many glaring mistakes that he felt greatly embarrassed and retracted his proposition.[14] Nārāyaṇa Guru admitted many members of the lowest of the untouchables such as Pulayas and Paṛiahs to his *āśrams* and integrated them into the *āśram* community. They often cooked the *āśram* meals and sat down to eat with members of higher castes. Some of them were trained as priests and officiated at ceremonies in the temples that the Guru established. He exhorted the untouchables to give up their caste occupation and engage in other professions. Toddy-tapping was the traditional occupation of the Tīyya caste, a profession which inevitably led to excessive drinking and consequent evils in the community. The profession made others look down upon the Tīyyas. Nārāyaṇa Guru said:

> Liquor is poison. You should not manufacture it, supply it, or drink it. The tapper's body stinks, his dress stinks, his house stinks, everything that he touches stinks.

Nārāyaṇa Guru admitted every one irrespective of caste distinctions to worship in the temples that he founded, even the lowest categories. This was, in most instances, against the protest and disapproval of many Tīyya leaders. He advised Tīyya parents to give Sanskritic names to their children, hitherto the privilege of Brahmins. He asked them to give up worshipping the deities relegated to them by the Brahmins and worship Hindu deities. This Sanskritisation process improved their self-image and confidence, though it incensed most of the *savarṇa* castes.

During their meeting at Śivagiri in 1920 Gandhi had a long discussion with the Guru on his caste and religious ideology. Gandhi, who was a believer in *varṇāśramadharma*, opined that the caste system followed nature.

He cited the analogy of the leaves on a tree which are of different sizes. The Guru replied that the differences were superficial and extending the analogy said that though the leaves were not of equal size their juice tasted alike.[15] He continued that although individuals seemed different they were all manifestations of the same essence, basing his argument on Advaitic theology. Gandhi said that the Guru's reply was very convincing. Gandhi was highly impressed at the way that the Pulaya and other untouchables in the *āśram* recited prayers and *Upaniṣadic* verses. Nitya Chaitanya Yati states that it was the Guru's emissary T. K. Mādhavan who impressed upon Gandhi the need to include untouchability in the action programme of the Indian National Congress.[16]

Religion

Though by upbringing Nārāyaṇa Guru was a Hindu, he was essentially a pluralist as far as his approach to religion was concerned. The influence of Buddhism on his thinking is quite apparent from what has been said so far. But he respected all religions. In the wanderings of his early years, when to some extent he suffered ostracisation from his community due to his radical ideas on caste, it was Christians and Muslims who befriended him. He had enjoyed commensal meals with Muslims eating from the same plate, as Muslims are wont to do, and listening to Qur'an readings and taking part in religious discussion with them. He used to state that the purpose of all religions is the same. He said of this fundamental unity in diversity that when rivers merge into the ocean one cannot distinguish between their different waters. In the poem *Srī Nārāyaṇa Smṛiti* he wrote

> *Anēka giri sambhūta*
>
> *nimna geva mahōdhadhīm*
>
> *Ēkam sanātanam vastu*
>
> *Prāpya viśramyāti swayam*[17]
>
> Just as rivers flowing down from several mountains merge into the ocean all religions merge and rest in the one Eternal Being.

As with caste this personal hermeneutic of religions was based on his advaitic beliefs. He stated that religions have authority only to set the jīvātma in the right direction. His poem *Mata Mīmāṃsa* begins with the words "*Pala matavum ēka sāram*". Religions are many but their essence is the same. He continued:

> Not seeing this like the blind men and the elephant
>
> The unenlightened argue ceaselessly
>
> Which observing remain steadfast undisturbed.
>
> (*Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam* 44)[18]

He used to quote the passage from the *Gītā* in which Kṛṣṇa stated that he would appear to the devout in whatever form they meditated upon him. Another of his oft-quoted sayings is "*Matamētāyālum manuṣyan nannāyāl mati* (It is enough if a person is good whatever may be his religion)". This reflects his belief in the moral and ethical efficacy of all religions. Knowing that God is one he seemed to stress the humanist aspects of religion rather than creeds and practices. It is noteworthy that he made the Tīyyas give up many rituals such as animal sacrifice, the ecstatic and self-mortifying sword wielding oracles (*Kōmaram*), many of whom were fraudulent, and unnecessary rites of passage such as the *tālikeṭṭū kalyāṇam* (symbolic pre-puberty marriage).[19] To him they were inessential, needlessly expensive and even cruel. The Tīyya and other untouchables had gained notoriety in what was termed black magic spells for charming girls, visiting sickness on enemies, lyncanthrophy etc. The Guru asked them to abjure these practices.

He held an all-religion conference in the Advaita *āśramam* in Alwaye (Āluva) during 1924. The motto of the conference emblazoned on banners at the conference venue was:

> Not to argue and win, but to inform and be informed.

In his inaugural speech the Guru confessed his pluralistic approach and that he was instructing his disciples to adopt the same attitude to religions. Nārāyaṇa Guru realised that religion, like caste, was a powerfully divisive force in India. He exhorted the study of all religions and believed that the scriptures of all religions, like philosophical, scientific and artistic works, are the common heritage of humankind. He opined that the Buddha and Christ had no use for dogma and creeds. They sought for ways of salvation, found them and preached them to others. The saying "*Vēdam aupaurushēyam*" is usually interpreted as implying that the authors of the *Vedas* are unknown. The Guru had a different interpretation which postulated that the *Vedas* expressed ideas that were impersonal i.e. not confined to any particular religion or person.[20] In 1916 he went further. He wrote that he did not want to be associated with any particular religion. He proclaimed that he transcended both religious and caste identity. He admitted that he had established some temples at the behest of Hindus, but was ready to build places of worship for Christians and Muslims.[21] Speaking at a SNDP conference he stated that the term Ēṛava did not indicate any particular religious or caste group. He said that anyone should be permitted to join the organisation irrespective of his caste or religious identity. Similarly in his discussions with C. V. Kunhiraman, who to some extent was a critic of the Guru's policies, he said that he was ready to admit Christians and Muslims into his *āśrams*.

The Guru pointed out that there is striking commonality in mystical experience in all religions. He also argued that if the Vedic, Dvaitic, Advaitic, Viśiṣṭādvaitic, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, etc. can all be designated as

Hinduism, the different ways, which in conformity with particularities of time and place various spiritual leaders have preached for achieving *mokṣa*, could be brought under the umbrella term *ēkamata* (one religion) or *manuṣyamata* (human religion).[22] This approach seems similar to Radhakrishnan's concept of a universal tree of faith of which the historical religions are different branches. In his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* Radhakrishnan opined that unless the different religions of the world transformed themselves into the Universal Faith all of them would eventually fade away.[23] The idea underlying what Radhakrishnan termed the 'Universal Faith' and Nārāyaṇa Guru's *ēkamata* seems to be the same. Both believed that religions being in conflict with each other and not unifying would eventually spell their extinction. Following the same line of thinking in his debate with C. V. Kunhiraman, one of the founders of the Rationalist Society of Kēraḷa, the Guru referred to the diversity of Hinduism, stating that the 280 million Hindus of that time in reality could be said to follow 280 million religions. However, since the beliefs of all of them had some common characteristics they are all considered to be followers of one religion, viz. Hinduism. He therefore concluded that since all religions in the world had common features all of us could very well be considered to be followers of one religion which he would call *manuṣyamata* – Human Religion. The Guru seems to be implying that the disparities between them were not so significant that they could not be subsumed under one conceptual system. The Guru said that in order to combat the rampant violence of Buddha's times the Buddha emphasised non-violence as the main principle of life. Muhammad stressed brotherhood, which was a need in the divided Arabia of his time. In India today the need was to contain caste and religious conflict. Thus the idea of *ēkamata* or *manuṣyamata* is relevant. This seems to be pragmatism pure and simple, but gave Nārāyaṇa Guru a rationale for the plurality of religions. As an Advaitic and a mystic he anyway did not care much about doctrinal and ritualistic disparities. He said that when we study all religions impartially and respectfully we will realise that the conflict is not due to *mata* (religion) but *mada* (arrogance).

A keen European missionary visited the Guru to try and convert him. The missionary told him, "you must join the Christian faith". The Guru asked him "how old are you?". The missionary replied " I am thirty". The Guru said "then I have been a Christian long before you were born".[24] However, in another context Nārāyaṇa Guru did extol the determination and strong faith of the Christian missionaries.[25]

Some leaders in the untouchable and low caste communities advocated conversion to Buddhism, Islam or Christianity to escape caste-based discrimination. It may be recalled that Dr Ambedkar led many untouchables to Buddhism. Nārāyaṇa Guru felt that such conversions were superficial. He was not in favour of religious conversion that was not prompted by genuine conviction and change of belief. Nārāyaṇa Guru

pointed out that following the Nyāya tradition he felt that each individual has his own understanding of religion. However, he often stated that he believed in the freedom to change religion. The son may not like the father's religion. Though he believed that religious freedom is essential, he felt that one's religious affiliation itself could not guarantee one's salvation. Though he admired and respected Buddhism, Christianity and Islam he felt that there were bad Buddhists, Christians or Muslims just as there were bad Hindus. He asked his disciples why some Tīyyas wanted to abandon the Hindu faith. They replied that they considered the Hindu scriptures vitiated by animal sacrifice, polytheism and caste differences. The Guru replied that he could still find some useful truths in the Hindu scriptures.[26] However, whatever may be the religious literature it was more important that people behaved properly. They have to be pure in action, word and thought, a sentiment which echoes the noble eightfold path of Buddhism. He said that it is no use if the scriptures are good but its followers are evil. His often quoted slogan was *matametāyālum manuṣyan nannāyāl mati* (It is enough that one is good whatever may be one's religion). He was quite pragmatic and liberal on this as on many other issues.

One God

The Guru's theism was firmly based on Advaita (monism; non-dualism). He was a self-confessed follower of Śaṅkara's theology, with the proviso that he did not concur with *varṇāśramadharma*. It is strange that Śaṅkara compromised his rigorous monistic philosophy to the extent of supporting the caste system. Kēśavan Vaidyaṟ opines that Śaṅkara accepted it as a lower reality caused by *avidya*, the innate ignorance clouding our perception.[27] The Guru saw God in all individuals including himself. In accordance with the concept *aham brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman) he installed a mirror in place of an idol in the temple he set up in Cēṟtala. He was quite radical, though fully in consonance with his Advaitic beliefs, in installing images in temples. In one temple he consecrated a burning lamp as the deity. In another the words *satyam*, *daya* and *dharma* (truth, compassion and righteousness). At the Āluva Advaita temple he preferred to have no image at all. He sought to raise the Tīyya's theism to a high intellectual and philosophical level. He asked them to abandon the gods to which the caste Hindus had relegated them, such as Cāttan, Cāmundi and Bhūtattān, and which gave them a feeling of inferiority. In his poem *Deiva Daśakam* he states that the creator, the created, and the material for creation are one and the same (*Deiva Daśakam* 5). In one temple he had a ploughshare installed as the deity. A disciple removed it and placed the Guru's sandals in its place. When the Guru questioned this action the disciple said that they had vowed to worship only the Guru and nothing else. The Guru asked, "If my sandal is myself, why not the ploughshare?".[28] The

fundamental unity of Advaitic ideology helped him to be compassionate to others. He used to say that if the *ātman* in everyone is the same then the joy of another is our joy and their pain is our pain. In his poem *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam* he reiterates this concept:

> Him, Me, all these that we think
>
> Is really the primal soul form in the world.
>
> What we do for our joy should work for the joy of others.
>
> (*Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam* 24)[29]

Though he was avowedly a follower of Śaṅkara's philosophy it is a fact that Nārāyaṇa Guru promoted the *bhakti mārga* among his followers. An examination of his literary output reveals that a number of his compositions were praises to God, and that not all of them were directed to Śiva. Poems such as *Vāsudevaśatakam* and *Srī Kṛṣṇa Kīrtanam* are directed to Viṣṇu rather than to Śiva. In this he seems to be following Rāmānuja, not Śaṅkara. However, his loyalty to Vedānta was unflinching and provided a strong foundation for his belief in the identity of all religions and deities. The poem *Eśavasyopaniṣad bhāṣa* is a rare hymn of prayer and praise to Brahman, the impersonal being, and in addition an exposition of Advaitic theology. His longer and more fervent works of praise such as *Śivastuti* and *Ṣaṃmukha stōtṛam* though reveal his Śaivite slant. However, it is clear that Nārāyaṇa Guru was not very much concerned about what people worshipped. He believed that God was one and was impersonal. He was happy for Christians to worship Jesus, Jews to worship Jehovah, Muslims Allah, and Hindus any of the various deities of Hinduism. He does not seem to have been particularly concerned about the ontological particularities of the Hindu deities. K. K. Pannikkar quotes that Nārāyaṇa Guru had opined that some of the Hindu gods may have been human beings who became deified in course of time. Śiva might have been a forest dweller who with his great deeds of strength and valour became prominent in people's consciousness. Similarly Rāma might have been a leader who with his good nature and benevolence earned the praise of his people.[30] The Guru also pointed out that Kṣēmēndṛan in his *Daśāvatāracarita* had made Buddha an avatar of Viṣṇu. The objective reality of these gods was not important to him. Once he told his disciples that it would be enough if they placed around the temple lamp portraits of illustrious individuals as deities. He saw God in all of them.

Conclusion

Nārāyaṇa Guru was a remarkable individual of our times. He was not just another of the many godmen of India, some of whom have been discredited as seekers of wealth and fame. Nārāyaṇa Guru was only

interested in the welfare of his country and community. The sphere of influence of some of the great Indian reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy and Vivekananda was among the elite and the intellectuals of Indian society. Nārāyaṇa Guru came down from the sylvan surroundings of his mountain abode to serve the poor and downtrodden sections of society.

His principal objective had been to try and ameliorate the divisive nature of Indian society. For this he did not assume a confrontational approach. He sought to educate society through his teachings, jokes and repartees and through his writings. His principle in reform was *dvugdhvam jñānāgninām sarvam* (In the fire of knowledge everything is destroyed). To him God was formless and unknowable except through self-realisation, in his own words the transcending of the *tripuṭi* – the known, the knower and the knowledge. This is attainable in various ways. This theology enabled him to transcend religious distinctions and the philosophical problems of a pluralistic approach to religions. He remained firmly rooted in an undogmatic stand undaunted by powerful orthodoxy and centuries-old traditions. He was a firm and uncompromising believer in the unity of humankind. In the *Ātmopadeśa Śatakam* he states:

> Everything exists, it is true. However the philosopher understands that all is one. If we do not look inward Maya plays many tricks on us.
> (*Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam* 88)[31]

Notes

For the transliterarion of Malayalam words I have employed the scheme given in Gaur, Albertine, *Catalogue of Malayalam Books in the British Museum, London*, London, Trusteee of the British Museum, 1971.

1. Vivēkānandan, 1986, p. 27.
2. Nārāyaṇan, 1984, p. 247.
3. Vivēkānandan, 1986, p. 15.
4. Kunhiraman, *Kēraḷa Caritram*, pp. 971–2, quoted in Nārāyaṇan, 1984, p. 22.
5. Nārāyaṇan, 1984, p. 266.
6. Vivēkānandan, 1986, p. 37.
7. Vaidyar, Kēśavan, *Srī Nārāyaṇa Cintakaḷ* (Thoughts of Sri Nārāyaṇa), Kottayam: D C Books, 1990, p. 93.
8. Quoted in Sānu, 1986, p. 507.
9. Quoted in Bhaskaran, 1991, p. 41.
10. Vaidyar, Kēśavan, *Srī Nārāyaṇa Guru Swantam Vacanaṇṇaḷilūte* (Sri Nārāyaṇa Guru through His Own Words), p. 21.
11. Quoted in Vivēkānandan, 1986, p. 266.
12. Guru, Srī Nārāyaṇa, 1991, p. 116.
13. Vaidyar, Kēśavan, *Srī Nārāyaṇa Guru Swantam Vacanaṇṇaḷilūte*, 1990, p. 24.
14. Yati, Ntya Caitanya, *Srī Nārāyaṇa Guru*, p. 19.
15. Sānu, 1986, p. 441.
16. Yati, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
17. Bhaskaran, 1991, p. 41.

18. Guru, Srī Nārāyaṇa, 1991, p. 119.
19. Mūrkōt, Kunhappa, 1988, p. 69.
20. Sānu, *op. cit.*, p. 471.
21. Vivēkānandan, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
22. Paṇikkar, 1989, p. 281.
23. Radhakrishnan, 1940.
24. Vaidyar, Kēśavan, *Srī Nārāyaṇa Guru Swantam Vacanaṇṇaḷilūte*, p. 59.
25. Ramachandran, 1981, p. 68.
26. Vaidyar, Kēśavan, *Srī Nārāyaṇa Guru Swantam Vacanaṇṇaḷilūte*, p. 58.
27. Vaidyar, Kēśavan, *Srī Nārāyaṇa Cintakaḷ*, pp. 31–2.
28. Vaidyar, Kēśavan, *Srī Nārāyaṇa Guru Swantam Vacanaṇṇaḷilūte*, p. 71.
29. Guru, Srī Nārāyaṇa, 1991, p. 116.
30. Paṇikkar, 1989, p. 270.
31. Guru, Srī Nārāyaṇa, 1991, p. 124.

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Ritual Dance in Kerala: Performance, Possession, and the Formation of Culture

Gavin Flood

Kerala is a land rich in natural resources – water, trees, fish, fruit – and rich in cultural and religious traditions, with Christians, Jews, Moslems, and Hindus sharing a comparatively small area with a high density of population. Each year throughout Kerala the festival season begins around November and carries on through until about March. Part of the festival scene is the *teyāṭṭam*, 'the dancing of the *teyyams*', the dance-possession rituals which occur at innumerable shrines throughout the land. In this paper I wish firstly to describe one of these festivals, to convey an impression and underline the vibrancy and startling impact of the *teyyam* culture, and secondly to suggest some ways of understanding it. The paper will focus on three areas, performance, possession and the formation of culture and will provide an example of the ways in which the 'religious' cannot be separated from the 'cultural'. The paper arose out of a preliminary research trip in 1993 to investigate Tantric traditions in Kerala, where I met Dr Rich Freeman who has been working on the *teyyam* festivals for some years and who first introduced me to the Kerala traditions. I refer the interested reader to his extensive work for a full account of the *teyyam* phenomenon.[1]

The Deities

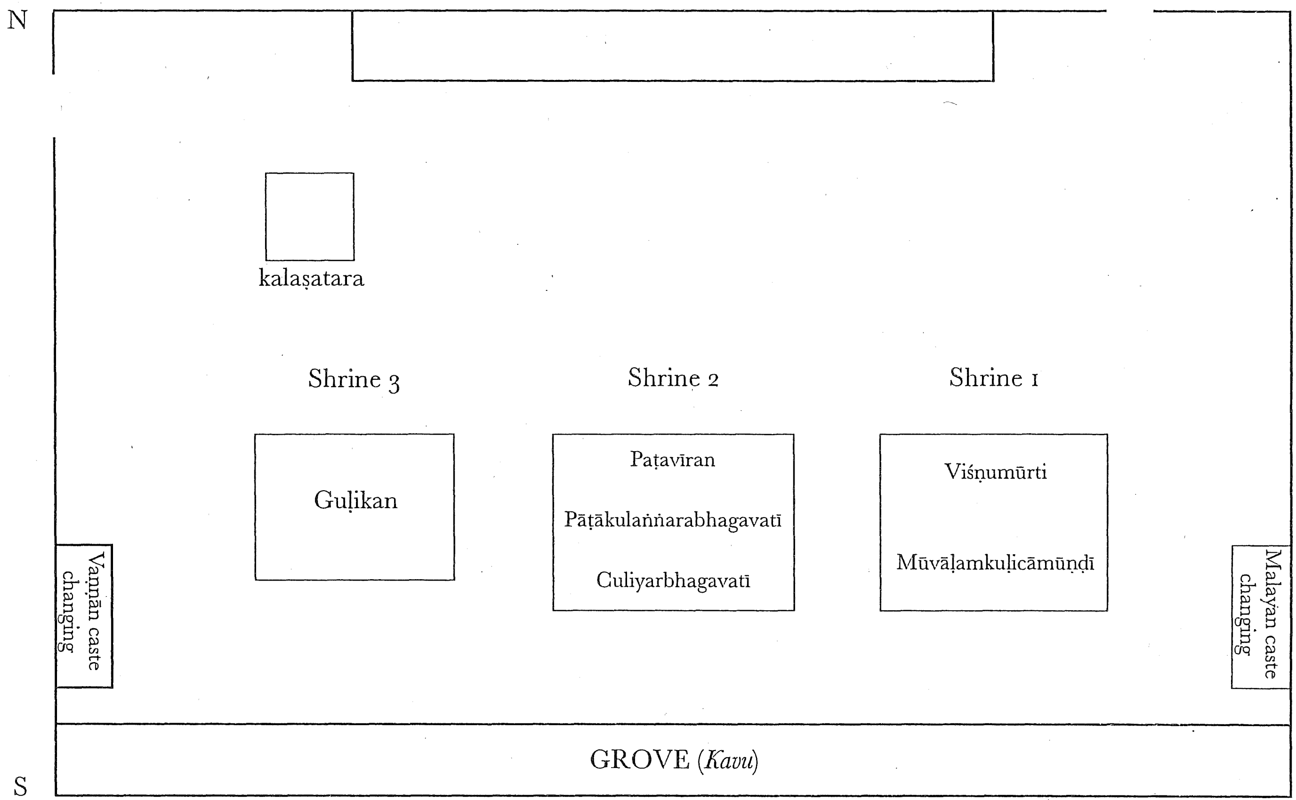
There are a variety of social groups in Kerala, indigenously classified as either *savarṇa*, within the 'class' system, or *avarṇa*, outside of that system. The Nambudri Brahmans are *savarṇa*, while all other castes are classified as *avarṇa* or *śūdras*, who traditionally have kept a fixed distance from the *savarṇas*.[2] As there are a variety of social groups, so there are a variety of deities. People of all castes revere the high, pan-south Indian deities such as Aiyappan and Murukaṉ, and their various manifestations and incarnations.

They revere low status deities such as the various local goddesses, particularly Māriyammaṉ, the 'smallpox' goddess, and they revere deities associated with family lineages and locations, such as goddesses linked to particular Nambudri family homesteads or *illams*. The shrines which are the focus of the *teyyam* cults belong to the lower, *avarṇa* castes and the deities celebrated in the festivals are low caste deities.

The *teyyam* deities, whose Malayalam name is possibly derived from the Sanskrit *deva*, are generally ferocious, and while being sometimes associated with the high gods of the Hindu pantheon, they tend not to lose their fierce natures and particular identities. They are also associated with the class of deities known as *vīrans*, heroic protectors and guardians of the temple. In the *teyyam* rituals, a performer, dressed and adorned as the god, becomes possessed by the deity and 'dances' or struts around the shrine in a possessed state, giving the 'sight' or 'vision' (*darśanam*) of the deity to the onlookers. He will perform a sequence of actions which include singing the songs of the *teyyam* and, if there is one, reciting the narrative associated with the *teyyam*. Most towns and villages have a shrine or collection of shrines, which house a number of *teyyams*, perhaps the most famous of whom is Mutupan, a composite image of two hunting figures and a dog.

The *teyyam* performance described here, which Dr Freeman and I witnessed, occurred at Nīlēśvaram in the north of Kerala in October 1993. Here within a sacred enclosure are three shrines housing six *teyyams* – two in one shrine, three in the central shrine and one in the remaining shrine. The shrine is the property of the Cāliya or weaver community, though other low caste groups perform the *teyyams*: the Malayan caste of professional sorcerers and *teyyam* performers, and the Vaṇṇān caste of washers, of lower status than the Malayans, who also practise ayurvedic medicine. The shrine complex itself is called the *vīrankavu*, the 'sacred grove of the heroes'. Indeed, this shrine complex, as many others in Kerala, had a sacred grove attached to it; an area which is kept wild and which might contain a shrine to the deity of the grove within it. Within the shrine area enclosed by a low wall there are the three shrines (see plan opposite), two buildings in which the two castes performing the *teyyam* change, and a building in which the elders of the community sit to watch the proceedings, where people are weighed against fruit which they then offer to the shrine deities. To the north and in front of the the *teyyam* Guḷikan's shrine is the *kalaṣatara*, the altar or mound (*tara*) for the toddy pot (*kalaṣa*). Toddy is an alcoholic beverage made from palm juice, offered to the deities and drunk by the ritual participants. The pot is an elaborate, ornate structure which is cicumabulated around the shrine before being offered to the *teyyam*.

The *teyyam* festival lasts for about two days, with each deity being performed in turn by a single dancer from each of the performing castes honoured to perform on that occasion. The particular dancer is chosen by the elders of the Cāliya community. It is an honour to be chosen, and the



The Vīrankāvu at Nīlēśvaram
(Not to scale)

dancer will perform all the *teyyams* permitted by his caste. This will involve being awake for long periods of time and dancing for several hours as one deity follows the next in sequence. The *teyyam* dancer is decorated and adorned in the image of the deity and moves through a sequence of prescribed actions. The events begin with the rapid drumming (*tuṭaṅṅal*) by a small group of musicians. The performer then begins his dance by the *kalaṣatara* altar, singing praises to the deity, telling the *teyyam*'s story, and performing invocatory rites. Upon seeing his reflection in a mirror which has been given to him along with a sword, the manifestation of the *teyyam* in the shrine, the performer becomes possessed by the deity. He walks or dances to the shrine of the *teyyam*, which is now his own shrine, sometimes supported by attendants, to the accompaniment of the rapid, rhythmic beat of the drums. Once before the shrine he sings or chants in Malayalam a series of laudations to the deity, praising the deity first in the third person, then in the second person and finally in the first person and the possession is complete. The performer enacts out the *teyyam* mythology, tells of the *teyyam*'s deeds and parades around the compound taunted by a crowd of young men to whom he responds with varying degrees of aggression.[3]

The *teyyams* of each shrine are enacted in turn. The first to be performed are a male deity Viśṇumūrti and a goddess Mūvāḷamkuḷicāmūṇḍī. Viśṇumūrti is a local deity who is associated with Narasiṃha. In the myth, a landlord of the Nayar caste mistreated and forbade his servant to worship Viśṇu, so Viśṇumūrti was empowered by Viśṇu to exact vengeance upon the Nayar landlord, which he did by tearing out his entrails. This is, of course, directly analogous the the story of Narasiṃha, with the wicked Nayar landlord replacing Hiraṇyakaśipu and the servant replacing Prahlāda. This myth is repeated by the *teyyam* and the killing of the Nayar landlord enacted before Viśṇumūrti's shrine.

Mūvāḷamkuḷicāmūṇḍī is even more ferocious. She was the goddess invoked to protect a Nambudri against another who was magically attacking him. The attacking Brahman then ensnared the goddess through the power of his mantra, put her in a copper vessel, sealed the lid, and buried her in a hole. Furious, the goddess burst out of the vessel and chased the Brahman who ran, terrified, to the Trikanyalapan Śiva temple for protection. Here the goddess agreed to settle down if she could be installed there beside Śiva, which duly happened.[4] As with the story of Viśṇumūrti, this story is told by the *teyyam* dancer in front of the shrine before he becomes possessed by her. Mūvāḷamkuḷicāmūṇḍī is perhaps the most ferocious, with a massive headdress she parades around the compound, taking sacred weapons from the shrine, such as a sacred bow, swords and shield, given to her by the priest, and, taunted by a crowd of young men, she symbolically (and less symbolically) attacks them. This symbolic, and sometimes actual, violence is performed in a state of possession in which the dancer trembles and breathes rapidly, while still retaining enough control to perform the

required sequence of events. Sometimes, however, the *teyyam* becomes very ecstatic and injuries, mainly to the *teyyam*, have occurred.

The middle shrine at Nīlēśvaram contains a god, Paṭavīran, and two goddesses, Pāṭākulaṅṅarabhagavatī and Culiyarbhagavatī. This *teyyam* is performed by the Vaṇṇāns. There is no surviving mythology about Paṭavīran and we know nothing about him except that he is connected with a war between two families (*gotras*). Pāṭākulaṅṅarabhagavatī (whose name refers to the place of her origin and that she is fond of singing) was a Nayar household goddess who migrated with families as they moved and ended up in the *teyyam* shrine at Nīlēśvaram. Her traditional role in a number of Nayar temples dedicated to pan-Indian gods has been to take food offerings to the deity and to the Nayar guardian Agampati. She is sometimes associated with Bhagavatī or Bhadrakālī, the Nayar goddess of war, epidemics, land and fertility who is worshipped in smaller, private Nayar temples. The other goddess of the shrine, Culiyarbhagavatī, is a war goddess associated with the royal Nayar household and with the Nambudri tantris (Brahmans who install images in temples) but has no mythology associated with her – or at least any mythology she might have had is forgotten.

The last *teyyam* to be performed is Guḷikan, a local deity associated in mythology with a second death which emerges after Śiva has destroyed Yama. Guḷikan is also the name of the invisible planet causing calamities (and is again associated with Yama in this way, who is associated with Pluto). All these deities are 'hot' and impure in contrast to the pure, 'cool', high gods of the Brahmanical Hindu pantheon. They are local deities with local mythologies, sometimes associated with hunting, whose status is elevated by being associated with deities of the pan-Hindu pantheon.

One of the most interesting occurrences during the performance is when the deity moves out of the compound and dances through the streets of the town to a local temple whose central deity is a form of Śiva. Here the *teyyam* knocks at the door to demand entrance but is not allowed to enter, although there may be verbal exchanges between the *teyyam* and the Brahmans inside. She then returns to the *teyyam* shrine giving her *darśanam* to people on the way and entering houses and so blessing them. Once back at the shrine, she again parades around the compound and then is seated upon a stool by the toddy-pot altar (*kalaṣatara*). The toddy pot, which has cicumabulated the shrine, is offered to the *teyyam* and a chicken is sacrificed by beheading. Its blood is put into a bowl, which is then tipped out as a *bali* offering to the *teyyam*. With the sacrifice of the chicken (or several chickens) the rite is more or less at an end and the *teyyam* comes back to a condition of normality, eventually retiring to the changing rooms. With the end of one performance there are a few hours to wait for the next, when the same pattern of possession, dancing around the compound, visiting and being rejected from the temple, the toddy offering and chicken sacrifice is repeated.

The *teyyam* rituals are open to many levels of understanding and we can observe here important structural and semantic processes concerning the transmission of values and the formation of culture. I wish here to highlight three levels at which we can understand the *teyyam*'s dance: a level of performance, a level of possession and a level of culture formation.

Performance

A distinction can be drawn between ideology, which is primarily cognitive, and performance which is primarily active and affective. It might be argued that the cognitive dimension to performance is minimal and that performance does not reflect a reality external to it. I would, however, argue that the *teyyam* contains both cognitive (and therefore ideological) and also performative dimensions. That is, the performance, among other things, expresses an ideology, by which I mean a system of belief, its expression in power, and a legitimation of power relations. While there may be other aspects of life and personality expressed in the *teyyam* performance, it is the expression in performance of a cognitive, ideological dimension which illumines the nature of the *teyyam* phenomenon.

The *teyyam* is totally embedded within the cultural and religious matrix of the Malayali communities of Kerala, and loses all meaning outside of those contexts. While there are obvious iconographic connections with Kathakali theatre, unlike the Kathakali, the *teyyam* could not be exported. Indeed, I would guess that Kathakali is a development from the dance possession of the *teyāṭṭam*. But whereas in Kathakali the audience observes a performance which is removed from the gods it depicts, in the *teyyam* the audience is totally involved in the performance whose gods are not removed, but immediately present. In the *teyāṭṭam* the audience and the gods are all on the stage.

In *The Future of Ritual*, the performance theorist Richard Scheckner lists six templates for the analysis of play. These six are: structure, the relationships among events constituting play acts; process, the way play acts are generated and their phases of development; experience, the emotions of the participants; function, the purposes served by the play act; ideology, the values communicated and criticized, knowingly and unknowingly; and the frame, the way in which the performers and audience know when the play act begins, is taking place, and is over.[5] Though Scheckner does not place these categories in any hierarchy, some are arguably more significant than others and the *teyyam* can be examined in their light.

Taking the first two together, we can see that the structure and process of the *teyyam* expresses social relationships and the self-perception or ideology of the community within the wider Hindu context. A number of factors have to be considered here, particularly the spacial arrangement of

the shrines and the relation of the performers to the onlookers, what might be called the social geography of the *teyāṭṭam*. The rectangular shrine compound itself, the *vīrankavu*, is enclosed by a low wall, a sacred space set off from the everyday world of work. Within this sacred space, having removed their footwear, people move about reverentially, except when the *teyyam* is dancing and the crowd follow the deity in a boisterous mood. Within the sacred space of the *vīrankavu* the three shrines are located next to each other. These shrines are only approached by those in authority: the oil-lamp lighter who keeps all the lamps burning during the festival, and the priest who administers to the god, handing the *teyyam* dancer the deity's weapons and shield. Castes lower than the Cāliyas, other than the *teyyam* performers, are not permitted within the shrine area, although on the occasion here described, Dr Freeman and myself were exceptionally allowed to observe events from a privileged position upon a *teyyam* shrine, thanks to a local dignitary.

The relationships between events which constitute the *teyyam* are significant in making statements about social relationships to do with group status and gender. The women stay back from the *teyyam*, while it is the young men who let off steam through chasing after the deity and risking a few bruises from the goddesses' wrath. The *teyyam* can assault the crowd, but is calm when he goes before the elders of the community who receive his *darśanam*. But one of the most significant sequences in the festival process is the marching of the *teyyam* outside of the compound into the streets, into the world of work and people's homes, and marching to the temple administered by the Nambudri Brahmans. Here the *teyyam* does not enter the temple. The low caste deity does not sully the purity of the high caste god, as the low caste Cāliyas would not pollute the Nambudris. As the *vīrankavu* is to the temple, so is the *teyyam* to the high god Śiva, and as the *teyyam* is to Śiva, so the Cāliyas are to the Nambudris. Thus the *teyyam* performance demonstrates a power relation between deities and between social groups which is acted out in the social geography of the *teyyam* shrine and its relation to the temple.

The *teyyam* legitimates power relationships between social groups within the wider society. The social geography of the festival marks out the Cāliya caste from other groups and marks out their deities from the high caste deities. The social geography of the *vīrankavu* and the implicit rules about who can and cannot attend the festival, makes a statement about, and legitimizes, a system of values; the performance expresses an implicit ideology. The meaning of the *teyyam* serves to sustain implicit relations of domination.[6] The *teyāṭṭam* is significant, therefore, not only in terms of who is included in the rite, but, as Bourdieu has brought to our attention with rites of passage, who is excluded.[7] Within the *teyyam* an ideology of social restriction and the containment of groups within defined boundaries is promoted and reinforced. Lower social groups are excluded from the

festival, higher groups tend not to come, and the *teyyam* is rejected by the high caste deity. Although immensely powerful, the *teyyam*'s power still cannot meet the power of the high Hindu gods, but nevertheless needs to be accommodated and absorbed by them, as can be seen in the mythology of the goddess Mūvāḷamkuḷicāmūṇḍī, who is installed beside Śiva and so contained and controlled in his temple.

The values of the Cāliya community and, indeed, wider society are reflected in the festival. The performers, and the deities they embody, accept the order encoded in the rites. If value is 'intrinsic to ritual', as Rappaport claims,[8] then the *teyyam* embodies and expresses that value system. The *teyyam* performance functions to convey the values of the community and expresses, if not clearly articulates, an ideology.

The ideology expressed in the *teyāṭṭam* is not monolithic, but operates by a number of unspoken rules. It expresses power within the Cāliya community: between the Cāliyas and lower social groups, making a statement about their distinction from those groups, and between the Cāliyas and higher social groups, particularly the Nambudri Brahmans. The relation of the Cāliyas to lower caste groups is, however, not merely one of superiority, but also one of reciprocity and a recognition of the power of those groups who perform the *teyyams*. The *teyyam* dancers are structurally lower than the Cāliyas in a caste hierarchy, yet during the festival, the *teyyam*, who as a human is a low caste dancer, *is* the Cāliya deity; the consciousness or *caitanyam* of the *teyyam* has entered the dancer and he has become that god. The ideology contained within the *teyyam* festival therefore speaks from a number of perspectives, or, in Terry Eagleton's words, 'from a multiplicity of sites'.[9] This ideology is not 'pure' or unitary, but expresses a number of conflicting interests and asserts itself through the voice of the *teyyams* against the dominant, brahmanical power, while at the same time endorsing that order, or power-structure, and establishing its place within it. The *teyyam* presents itself against the 'other' of the Brahmanical temple deity, while at the same time allowing itself to be appropriated within the structural hierarchy of a Brahmanical, pan-Hindu scheme. The *teyyam* thus tacitly endorses the power structure of the Cāliya community within the wider 'Hindu' society and legitimates that power. The ritual violence of the *teyyam* reproduces tacit norms and values, reinforcing the dispositions to behave in particular ways; reinforcing what Bourdieu has called the *habitus*, the dispositions which generate particular practices.[10]

Possession and Violence

Eagleton has pointed out that a successful ideology engages significantly with people's wants and needs[11] and the *teyyam* certainly seems to provide emotional expression for those involved, and emotion – Scheckner's third

template – is very significant in understanding the festival. There is an obvious emotional exuberance of many participants and the *teyyam* himself is in a state of possession. There has been much written on the cathartic nature of ritual and on role reversals and inversions which occur during those times; I am thinking here particularly of the work of René Girard and Victor Turner. Girard has argued that the purpose of a festival is the protection of society against horrifying violence; that without the safety-valve of ritual festivals, violence would erupt within and disrupt communities. Particularly, he argues, festivals culminate in sacrifice which channels violence into the sacrificial victim and a purification of social tension ensues.[12] The ferocity of the deities of the *teyyam* and the sacrifice which is the culmination of each rite, can be seen in this light. The violence of the *teyyam* is a violence which, through its expression, renews and purifies the community. That is, on the Girardian hypothesis, the potential of violence exists within the community, and when channelled into the cultural form of the *teyyam* and the sacrifice of fowls, diminishes the threat of violence.

However, while this theory is attractive – the *teyyam* certainly demonstrates a controlled violence as do the crowd – the *teyāṭṭam* strongly resists merely one kind of interpretation and the *teyāṭṭam* does not easily fit Girard's characterisation of the festival as:

> a deliberate violation of established laws ... celebrations in which sexual promiscuity is not only tolerated but prescribed or in which incest becomes the required practice.[13]

Certainly none of these features are present during the *teyyam* festivities: there is no apparent sexual promiscuity, there is no apparent incest or symbolic incest, roles are not reversed and the leaders of the community are not abused, but on the contrary, retain a dignified distance. Nevertheless, there is a strong element of ritualised violence by the deity towards the crowd and towards the high caste deity, and some degree of violence from the crowd towards the *teyyam* – at the very least the crowd lets off steam through taunting the *teyyam* and lighting innumerable, deafening fire crackers.

The emotion evoked in the crowd is therefore integral to the structure and process of the *teyāṭṭam*. The violence of the goddess separates her from the cool high caste deity in the temple, and thereby excludes that deity, erases that deity's possibility. Similarly the violence of the crowd might be said to express the exclusion of other social groups and the exclusion of women from male social expressions. The ritualized violence underlines the potential violence within the community and, indeed, beyond the community in the power of the goddess or god.

We are still left with the interesting question concerning the inner emotional state of the *teyyam* dancer. The *teyyam* is possessed by the deity. This is publicly observable and occurs at a specific juncture of the rite

when the dancer looks into a mirror and then is entered by the god. The question which arises to the western observer, so trained in reification, is what is 'really going on' in the dancer's mind? In his study of *teyyam*, Rich Freeman asked this question to a number of dancers and received a number of replies, ranging from the dancer's merely performing what is expected of them, to dancer's entering a trance state in which they are not in conscious control of what is happening to them.[14]

The question about the inner emotional states of the dancers is interesting. It is really a question about the way an individual appropriates cultural symbols and imbues them with personal significance and meaning. In his work on possession in Sri Lanka, Gananath Obeyesekere has shown how cultural forms can have private meanings whose genesis must be sought in the deep, unconscious motivations of those involved.[15] This uncovering of deep motivations is, of course, the realm of Psychoanalysis. With regard to the *teyyam* dancers, a similar exercise could theoretically be performed. Each dancer, while fulfilling a social role, experiences a variety of emotional states and appropriates the cultural meaning of the *teyyam* to his own private realm, in a number of ways.

Yet while this is interesting and relevant to the particular individual involved, it is not so relevant to the study of *teyyam* as a social fact. As Freeman has observed, possession is a 'performative act'.[16] Whatever the inner, emotional state of the dancer, whatever the private state of consciousness, whatever the personal biography which has led him to perform that role, all this is irrelevant to the social and cultural expression, to the performance.[17] The private world of the individual is completely subsumed beneath the cultural fact of the *teyyam*, who performs in a culturally determined and anticipated way. The mask becomes the face; the dancer becomes the deity at the level of performance. Whatever is the inner state of the dancer beneath the level of performance – while of interest to those, such as ourselves, acculturated to the importance of a private, inner world – it is an irrelevance to understanding the *teyyam* as a cultural event. This is not to say that cultural events cannot have deep motivations, I think that they can, but these deep motivations are individual appropriations of cultural symbols; the imbuing of culturally available events with private, and perhaps unconscious, meaning. Nor is this to say that the origins of cultural meanings cannot in some sense be unconscious, but rather, that in the public sphere of cultural meanings, the unconscious origin is lost and can only be appropriated or re-appropriated by a particular individual. At the level of performance, deep, personal motivation does not illumine what is happening.

So far I have described the *teyāṭṭam* and suggested a number of interpretations based on Scheckner's templates for understanding performance. Of particular importance here is the idea of implicit power-relations within the value system or ideology of the *teyyam* and the

reinforcing of norms or behavioural habits (the *habitus*). I have also suggested that while unconscious or deep motivation may be of interest in understanding the particular *teyyam* dancer, it is not significant in understanding *teyyam* as a cultural event, as a performance. In other words, there is a clear distinction between deep motivation and cultural event or performance.

While the *teyyam* as the personal expression of an individual psychology is not open to general interpretation – there would be the need for many interviews with a qualified analyst – the *teyyam* as a cultural event or performance is open to analysis and interpretation. So far we have examined the *teyyam* as performance at the level of social structures and power relations, or in terms of ideology and value. I lastly wish to examine the *teyyam* as a performance which generates cultural meaning. While this overlaps with the kinds of thing I have been speaking about so far, this next level in, as it were, potentially deepens and sharpens the analysis. I take the generation of cultural meaning to specifically refer to the generation of signs, an idea which will become clear presently.

The *Teyyam* and Cultural Meaning

Within Linguistics a distinction is made between competence and performance. Competence is the potential language available to speakers and implies language structure, its grammar, phonology and even semantics, free from any particular context. Performance, on the other hand, is the manifestation of language use in contexts, which is open to the kind of analysis known as Pragmatics, the discipline concerned with understanding of linguistic performance. Pragmatics is the study of the relation of signs to interpreters of those signs.[18] Indeed, it could be argued that all semantics is in fact pragmatics, for meaning is always contextual.

The development of a pragmatic analysis of the *teyyam* would demonstrate the formal connections between linguistic utterances during the *teyāṭṭam* and the relation of those utterances to the actors and audience in the performance. This would involve a study of the Malayalam linguistic utterances during the festival which is beyond the scope of the present paper. But one example where a pragmatic analysis might be developed is when the dancer, having looked into the mirror and been possessed by the *teyyam*, proceeds to recite the *teyyam*'s praises before his or her shrine, first in the third person, then in the second person, addressing his remarks directly into the shrine, and lastly in the first person, indicating that the possession is complete and that he has become the deity. Here the relationship between the dancer and the deity, indeed, between the deity and all human beings, is encoded in the structure of the language; the language and the context of that particular incident reveal a lot about the nature of the

teyāṭṭam; a meaning which can only be perceived in the relation of the language used to the situation. The praise of the *teyyam* in the three persons is a speech-event which can only be understood with reference to the context of the *teyyam*; conversely the speech-event illumines the nature of the *teyyam* as well.

Although a pragmatic analysis of the language used in the *teyyam* is a desideratum, we can nevertheless go some way towards understanding the generation of cultural meanings through examining the non-linguistic aspects of the *teyyam*. If we extend the notion of performance from the linguistic arena, it becomes open to interpretation in terms of non-linguistic signs and through understanding the *teyyam* as performance, we can understand to some extent the way in which culture is generated. The following remarks have been strongly influenced by Valentine Daniel's book *Fluid Signs*,[19] in which he develops a analysis of the culture of a Tamil village, based on the understanding of the sign in the work of Charles Peirce, the American philosopher and founder of Semiotics.

This is not the place to develop a description of Peirce's complex classification of the sign – he has nine types of sign and ten classes – but put briefly, his interpretation of the sign is based on the relationship between what he calls the *signans* or, more familiarly, the signifier, and the *signatum*, the signified. The sign, which he calls the *representamen*, stands for, or represents, something. Furthermore it represents something to someone, whom he calls the *interpretant*, in some respect, which he calls the *ground*. The terms representamen, object, interpretant and ground are the way in which a sign signifies. With regard to the idea of performance, Peirce distinguishes between an *icon*, something which functions as a sign whose features resemble its object; the *index* in which there is a causal connection between it and its object; and finally the *symbol* in which there is an arbitrary, conventional, or habitual association with its object. The symbol therefore requires the interpretant to make the connection between the representamen and its object. In the sign, be it an index, icon or symbol, there is an irreducibly triadic relation between the representamen, the object and the interpretant.[20]

The *teyyam* we can see as both an icon and a symbol in Peirce's terms. That is, the actor of the *teyyam* represents the deity to the audience who perceive him in the context, the ground, of the festival within the *vīrankavu*. The deity in the shrine is aniconic, present there only in the form of weapons, the swords, shields, bow, or a trident in the case of Guḷikan, and so there is an arbitrary connection between the representation of the deity in the shrine and its representation in the *teyyam* dancer. At this level the *teyyam* is a symbol of the deity; the relationship between the deity and the dancer is purely arbitrary and conventional, determined by the ground or context of the *teyāṭṭam* festival. At another level the *teyyam* is the dancer and the *teyyam* is a representation of itself; the representamen is its object for the

interpretant or observer. In this case the *teyyam* is an icon, sharing the identical qualities and form of what it represents, namely itself. The possessed dancer becomes the icon of the *teyyam* and the dancer's personality or individuality is lost beneath this.

In this process we can see the development of cultural meanings related to value and social structure which we discussed earlier. The *teyyam* dancer is the representamen of the object which is the deity, for the interpretant who varies in different contexts. That is, there are a number of interpretants within the grand-context of the *teyyam* festival: the young men who taunt the deity, the women who watch at the side, the elders of the community, the low caste man who waits in the street for the deity's *darśanam*, the Nambudri priests who do not give entry to the *teyyam* into the Śiva temple, the local politician fishing for votes, and the western 'observers'.

In each of these cases the particular context in which the *teyyam* functions varies. For the western observer, the *teyyam* is rarely seen as the deity in the way in which many of the interpretants present would perceive the *teyyam*. For the elders, before whom the *teyyam* displays himself, giving them his *darśanam*, the *teyyam* is their deity who blesses them for another year by his walking presence among them. The community elders, as interpretants, in turn become representamens themselves for others; symbols of the power relations within the Cāliya community. For the interpretant of the Nambudri priest in the temple, the *teyyam* is a low caste deity who would pollute the shrine of the high caste god. The Nambudri priest in turn becomes the representamen of the high caste, Brahmanical value system which is the dominant ideology. The Cāliya woman as the interpretant of the *teyyam* depends upon the wider context of her age, education, status and so on. She may, perhaps, perceive her potential power or representation in the *teyyam* Goddess, or may not.

The point is that social and cultural meanings are generated through the complex relationship between representamen (the *teyyam*/dancer), the object (the *teyyam*/deity), the interpretant (at one level all the individuals present, at another level the different social groups and gender differentiations) and the ground (the context in which the *teyyam* occurs). This ground will, of course, vary with different individuals and groups, but most would share the common ground and assumptions of the Hindu social world and practices of deity propitiation, making vegetarian and non-vegetarian offerings to the gods, and receiving their blessings in the form of turmeric powder on their foreheads or some good fortune, such as a child becoming well again.

The *teyāṭṭam* is a deep and complex phenomenon, as well as a colourful and, partly, enjoyable one (except, perhaps, for the chickens). Both purity and violence meet in the *teyyam* who becomes the focus of awe, hope and, indeed, play. But there is a point at which analysis has to stop, beyond

which meanings become imprecise, and we have to simply accept it as a representation of itself. As the dancer Isodore Duncan once said in a different context, 'if I knew what it meant I wouldn't have to dance it'.

Notes

1. Freeman, 1991.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
3. For a description and analysis of a variety of *teyyam* performances, see Freeman, 1991, especially chs. 3 and 4.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
5. Scheckner, 1995, p. 25.
6. See Thompson, 1984, p. 4.
7. Bourdieu, 1991, pp. 117–26.
8. Rappaport, 1992, pp. 5–30.
9. Eagleton, 1991, p. 45.
10. Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78.
11. Eagleton, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
12. Girard 1977, pp. 119–42.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
14. Freeman, 1991, pp. 319–20.
15. Obeyesekere, 1981, pp. 169–82.
16. Freeman, 1993, p. 116.
17. See Freeman, 1991, p. 319.
18. Levinson, 1983, p .1.
19. Daniels, 1984.
20. Peirce, 1977, p. 81. For Peirce's theory of signs see Hookway, 1985, pp. 118–44.

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Aspects of Esoteric Southern Buddhism

L. S. Cousins

This paper is concerned with a relatively little known form of Buddhism, now found mainly in South-East Asia. There is a surprisingly widespread notion that Theravāda Buddhism is, at least doctrinally, a rather uniform, if not monolithic, type of Buddhism. This is certainly a mistaken impression; so in the first part of this paper I shall begin by attempting to outline briefly some aspects of the historical diversity of this type of Buddhism and then go on to survey the various trends of twentieth century and contemporary Theravāda Buddhism as different scholars have described them. Having established something of the nature of this in fact rather varied history, I shall then discuss the historical origins of the specific tradition which I shall call Esoteric Buddhism and which some other scholars refer to as Tantric Theravāda. In the second part of the paper I survey certain of the particular ideas of this type of Buddhism, giving passages from texts which adopt this approach.

Part One

Historical roots

The name Theravāda strictly refers to a branch of the Buddhist *saṅgha* which adheres to a version of the monastic rules deriving from the second century after the Buddha's *parinibbāna* and claiming to be the original teaching (*theravāda*), later understood as 'doctrine of the Elders'. Since the alternative (more conservative) version of the Mahāsaṅghikas ceased to be used in the late mediæval period (probably in Nepal), the monastic traditions deriving from Tibet and China are properly speaking also Theravādin, or at least belong to traditions which were once Theravādin. This usage is quite comparable to such terms as 'Catholic' or 'Orthodox' in the history of Christianity. (Both parties would of course claim to be both

orthodox and catholic.) So for the most part I shall use the more satisfactory (and neutral) geographical designation of Southern Buddhism.

This reminder of the historical origins of Southern Buddhism serves to recall the considerable extension of this tradition in both space and time. It is the religious tradition of the majority in the present-day countries of Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Laos and Thailand (Siam) with smaller populations in geographically contiguous areas of Bangladesh, China, India, Malaysia and Vietnam. In total numbers the Buddhist population amounts to over 120 million people in this homeland area, not counting a few millions in the recent missionary outreach, mainly in India and Indonesia and among Chinese diaspora populations but also in smaller numbers in Europe, the Americas and Australasia.

In much of this homeland area Buddhism has quite ancient roots. This is most obviously the case with Ceylon which archæological data suggests was colonized from northern India around the sixth century BC, probably as part of a more general process in which urban settlements were extended southwards from the Gangetic area by colonisation.[1] The recent discovery at Anurādhapura of Brahmī inscriptions which appear to date from a century or two before the reign of the Emperor Asoka in the third century BC indicates close contact with cultural developments in the north.[2] We may then suspect that Buddhism had already reached the island and made some headway before its official introduction in the third century. Normally this kind of royal acceptance is likely to follow after a degree of prior penetration among the general population has already taken place. At a slightly later date the widespread nature of the Buddhist presence is well-evidenced by the archæological discovery of some hundreds of cave sites for monastic practice, scattered over a large part of the island.

Buddhism also has ancient roots in other areas of its present geographical outreach. Tradition in fact attributes to the Emperor Asoka missions to Suvaṇṇabhūmi 'the Gold Country' – this must be either a particular location in Southeast Asia or a general term for the whole area. Scholarship has generally rejected the historicity of these accounts, perhaps rightly; however, given the level of sea-born trade and other contacts they cannot be wholly ruled out. Future archæological research may yet provide evidence of them. Indeed it is clear from the archæological discoveries at Beikthano and elsewhere that the up-country Pyu people had obtained technical innovations directly or indirectly from Mauryan India. At present there is little firm evidence of cultural importations in the period from around the third century BC to the second century AD. Caution must be exercised here, however, since it is possible that Mauryan-style Buddhism would in any case have left little in the way of material remains.

In any case it is probable that forms of Buddhism using some kind of Middle Indian (Pali or closely related) were present among the Pyu and Mon peoples of present-day Burma and Thailand by the second century

AD and even perhaps somewhat earlier.[3] Most probably Buddhist traditions were introduced there from Ceylon or South India together with a form of Brahmī writing in the early centuries AD. It is likely that this would have been a form or forms of the Vibhajjavādin tradition current in Ceylon and the Tamil country. This would be a pre-Buddhaghosa form and not necessarily exclusively of the orthodox Mahāvihāra school.

Indeed it is clear from both literature and archæology that throughout the first millennium AD. other schools and traditions of Buddhism were present in Ceylon itself. In particular the important and at times numerically stronger[4] Abhayagiri school, while preserving a slightly divergent recension of the Pali scriptures, seems to have also studied North Indian Sanskrit literature, especially that of the Mahāyāna and later also that of the Mantrayāna. Archæological discoveries of Sanskrit texts, statues of *bodhisattvas* and various cult objects make this reasonably certain. Indeed some Mahāyānist practices continued until relatively recent times with a few remnants still current today.[5]

A similar picture emerges for Lower Burma in the mid-first millennium. Hence the presence of Sanskrit materials and Mahāyāna cult objects does not necessarily indicate the presence of Sarvāstivādin or other schools. It could equally be accounted for by the presence of a branch of the Abhayagiri tradition or some similar Pali-based school open to developments on the Indian subcontinent. In either case we could expect traditions and practices from diverse sources to be handed down to posterity. In fact even the orthodox Mahāvihāra school incorporates a good deal of material of North Indian origin in its little-studied later commentarial literature.[6] However, at a later period, as the evidence from Pagán clearly shows, distinct influences from the predominantly tantric and Sarvāstivādin Pāla Buddhism of Eastern India were certainly present in Burma.[7]

Looking more widely, there is no doubt of the presence of Sanskrit-based schools of Buddhism in Indo-China, and in some parts of present-day Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. We can then be sure that South-East Asia received a rich and varied heritage of Buddhist traditions from its own ancient beginnings, from later developments in India and equally from a plural situation in Ceylon.

Varieties of Southern Buddhism

There has in fact been considerable discussion among scholars of differing trends and tendencies in the Southern Buddhist countries. We cannot summarize the whole literature here, but some key points must be mentioned. First of all, the distinction between traditional and innovative, modernizing forms of Buddhism was already known to scholarship in the late nineteenth century. In 1962 Heinz Bechert adopted the term 'Buddhist

modernism' to describe the latter, offering (in 1964) a (non-exhaustive) list of twelve main characteristics. In 1970 Gananath Obeyesekere coined the memorable expression 'Protestant Buddhism'. This has been preferred by some scholars, but I must confess to finding it slightly tacky.

It is of course clear that there is no such thing as a monolithic movement of Buddhist modernism. Some of the tendencies classified under this heading have clearly been endemic in Buddhist history. For this reason, writing in 1984, I preferred to speak of three important trends, variously combined with traditionalism: modernism, reformism and ultimatism. By modernism I meant to indicate both institutional change to accommodate new social and economic circumstances and the adoption of concepts and practices influential in the modern world. Reformism on the other hand is the attempt rather to restore an earlier, ideal state of Buddhism in general and the *saṅgha* in particular. This is hardly something new – indeed it is probably as old as the formation of the Theravāda itself. A new element is, however, introduced through awareness of modern historical criticism, which differentiates more sharply the various strata of the tradition. The third trend, ultimatism, is the tendency to focus on the higher aspects of Buddhist practice and neglect traditional preliminary practices and outward forms. It too is a perennial in the history of Buddhism.

More recently still George Bond has distinguished three new developments alongside and partly stemming from Protestant Buddhism. The first of these and certainly the most important is Neotraditionalism, understood as a return to traditional ways with a minimal accommodation to the needs of the modern situation. The other two are the Insight meditation movement and moves towards an emphasis on social action.

The pace of change has, however, accelerated greatly in the last few decades with the result that scholars are now beginning to speak of Post-Protestant Buddhism (and perhaps even Post-modernist Buddhism?). The former term has been adopted by Obeyesekere and Gombrich to describe what they see as radical changes in recent decades in Sri Lanka. They characterise these as an infiltration of devotional religiosity and magical practices.[8]

In a recent paper Bechert has surveyed ten major new trends in contemporary Buddhism. I list them briefly in slightly amended form:

1. The Buddhist contribution to the world-wide so-called 'green' movement;
2. A reaction against Buddhist nationalism;
3. Reassertion of the teachings and values of traditional Buddhism;
4. Radical return to the roots of Buddhism (e.g. Santi Asoke);
5. Renewal of the ideals of the 'forest-dwelling' monks;
6. Revival of *samatha* meditation;
7. Revival of ritualism;

8. Syncretism with various other Buddhist traditions;
9. A tendency towards 'remythologization';
10. Reassertion of women's rights.[9]

The fourth of these is a form of what I call ultimatism. The majority of the others could be classified as either Neotraditionalism (3;7;9) or as a further development of tendencies long present in Buddhist modernism (1;8;10). Some contain elements of both these (5;6).

One other important cause of change is the movement of ideas and practices around the different Southern Buddhist countries. This is clearly very old and can sometimes be circular. Note the way in which the monastic ordination was restored to Ceylon from Burma under Vijayabāhu at the end of the eleventh century, only to be exported to both Burma and Thailand on various subsequent occasions, restored again from Thailand in the eighteenth century and imported several times from Burma in the nineteenth century. There could easily have been other occasions which we do not know about. Similar movements have clearly occurred both with texts and with ritual and meditation practices. We must then bear in mind that the study of individual Buddhist countries in isolation could be misleading.

Nor is this the only problem that could arise from the process of study itself. Some of the perception of change is clearly a result of the greatly increased numbers of scholars studying various aspects of Southern Buddhism. Many of these tendencies have probably been present, especially in South-East Asia, for a very long time, simply coming into fashion and going out of fashion at intervals. Ceylon on the other hand may be something of a special case, as Buddhism on the island appears to have passed through a kind of genetic bottleneck under Hindu and Christian rule in the late mediæval and early modern period, particularly as regards the Buddhism of the élite.

The origins of Esotericism

The above discussion has directed our attention away from the background practices of traditional Buddhism. In fact even this shows a great deal of variety, incorporating and preserving elements from many different sources. Given the long historical background mentioned above this should not be surprising. It is clear too that an elaborate and varied interface with popular deity cults has been the norm for almost all forms of Buddhism, since at least the time of Asoka and quite probably earlier.

Moreover, in traditional Southern Buddhism a rich ceremonial and elaborate ritualism has also been the norm for a very long time. Much of it goes back to the last centuries of the Anurādhapura kingdom in Ceylon and no doubt to a similar date elsewhere. Some at least is pre-Buddhaghosa,

with apotropaic elements deriving from the Canon itself.[10] This ritualism is sometimes attributed to Mahāyāna influences, but may equally be derived from those elements of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism which underlie the development of Mahāyāna. Similar problems arise if it is attributed to Hindu influences – it may equally have its source in the cult of the deities which was certainly a normal part of the life of lay supporters of the Buddhist *saṅgha* since the very beginnings of Buddhism. Of course, this is not to dispute the existence of many elements imported from Mahāyāna and Hinduism at a later date. Rather, it is to suggest that they could be introduced precisely because they fitted well with practices already current.

What I am concerned with here is a specific form of Southern Buddhism which I call Esoteric Buddhism. Let me first make clear that this is not the same as the more general practices of a magical kind which are as endemic in the Southern Buddhist countries as they were in Europe until quite recent times – in their local form involving the use of *yantra* or *mantra* and/or ritual for purposes of protection, healing, harming, empowering and general assistance. Nor is it the same as the equally endemic trance-based ecstatic and mediumistic practices used for similar purposes.

These are phenomena which are widespread in agricultural societies the world over. Gombrich and Obeyesekere draw attention to the way in which they have recently invaded the urban milieu in Sri Lanka. Similar phenomena can be seen in Bangkok. It should be noted, however, that this can itself be seen as an aspect of Buddhist modernism, a tendency which often in practice amounts to Europeanisation. I have myself seen European spiritualist literature displayed at centres for spirit-mediumship in Bangkok. More generally the last thirty years has seen produced in both Europe and North America a large body of occult literature of various kinds. Inevitably such works have an influence in Asia; it is precisely the urban middle class which is most exposed to them. Equally, young people studying abroad have met such ideas and practices.

Returning to esoteric Buddhism, what I am referring to is a type of Southern Buddhism which links magical and ritual practices to a theoretical systematisation of the Buddhist path itself. Of course the distinction I have made is in part an artificial one. Popular magic and ritual is on the one hand the raw material of esoteric Buddhism, while on the other we see rituals and mantras derived from esoteric Buddhism widely used at a popular level. A growing tendency since the mid-nineteenth century has been pressure from reformist groups (often supported by modernizing governments) to remove elements identified with esoteric Buddhism from monastic practice, but there is some evidence to suggest that it was a widely accepted part of normative Southern Buddhism before the nineteenth century.

Research in this area has been spearheaded by the work of F. Bizot, based originally on contacts with the still living form of this tradition in

Cambodia. He has collected a number of manuscript works of this kind and translated some of this material into French. It is not yet entirely clear where this literature fits in the overall history of Southern Buddhism, but Bizot has, as John Strong puts it:

> ... managed to show that, where many had once seen only "corruptions" or "popular aberrations", there may in fact be found a genuine tradition, complete with its own history, ideology, ritual and soteriological endeavours.[11]

At present there is no agreed terminology to designate this material. Bizot tended originally to speak of the unreformed Mahānikāya tradition and more recently of non-Mahāvihāravāsin currents. Bechert seems to prefer to speak of 'tantric Theravāda', a term also sometimes used by Bizot.

Bizot sees the origins of this tradition in the ancient Buddhism of the Mon. This may well be correct, but still leaves the problem of the ultimate source. There are at least five possibilities. It is perhaps useful to look at these:

1. *The Mantrayāna Buddhism of the later Indian Mahāyāna.*

This could be either a direct import from Bengal or via the Mantrayāna traditions which were at some points influential in, for example, Indochina and Java. The objection to this is well-indicated by Bechert:

> There is not the slightest hint at the influence of any Mahayanistic thought nor are there any traces of the terminology of those forms of tantric Buddhism which are known to have existed in India. In terms of its doctrinal background, this "tantric Theravāda" is based on the scriptures of Theravāda in Pali exclusively. The followers of this tantric Theravāda, however, discover a deeper meaning behind the obvious one in the doctrines and texts of the Theravādins.[12]

2. *Influences from Śaivite traditions formerly current in Cambodia and elsewhere.*

The objection to this is similar. There are a few concepts which perhaps derive from brahmanical tantric traditions. Notably the terms for some of the inner channels within the body seem to be Pali versions of those used in various Hindu traditions. Overall, however, the resemblances do not seem very great.

3. *A home-grown product which developed in Southeast Asia.*

Bechert has recently put forward this view:

> It seems that the esoteric teaching of tantric Theravāda originated when new methods of concentration and psychic cultivation which became known under the name of "tantra" in India spread over the whole world of Indian religion... . At that time Buddhism in mainland India was predominantly Mahāyāna, and thus tantric Buddhism arose on the basis of Mahayanism there. The Theravāda communities of Southeast Asia, however, have largely

> remained Hinayanistic. Thus, the new methods were adapted to Hinayanistic Theravāda and the terminology of Mahayanistic Tantrism including the use of the word tantra was avoided.[13]

This hypothesis would certainly account for the emergence of esotericism in Southern Buddhism and even possibly imply a fairly ancient date for this. There are other possibilities:

4. *A product of the Abhayagiri school in Ceylon.*

A similar process to the above might have taken place among the non-Mahāvihāra schools in Ceylon or among the followers of that school in mainland India. Unfortunately it has not so far proven possible to identify material which is clearly of this origin.[14] Moreover, the Abhayagiri school in Ceylon seems to have adopted Mahāyāna teachings and their Sanskrit literature without inhibition.

5. *A product of the Mahāvihāra tradition.*

We cannot as yet rule out the possibility of a development within the bounds of the orthodox tradition itself. Certainly of all schools this was the one most attached to the Pali language and the use of Pali terms to derive *mantras* is a strong feature of these Esoteric Southern Buddhist texts. Such a development could have occurred at various points in the history of the Mahāvihāra tradition. Indeed it might do much to explain that tradition's successful resistance to the trends which led to the demise of most other forms of Indian Buddhism.

Buddhaghosa mentions secret texts (*gūḷhaganthaṃ*) in three of his works, in the context of teachings which will not be received from a teacher if one does not pay proper respect.[15] The author of the *Abhidhamma* commentary and Upasena (*c.* 500 AD) refer to such secret texts, while discussing stinginess as to teaching (*dhamma-macchariya*).[16] There are also references to various texts prefixed by the appellation 'secret', but these were certainly considered heterodox.[17] The word *gūḷha* can hardly admit of any interpretation other than secret.[18] (*Gantha* of course does not necessarily refer to written texts.) So it is likely that trends towards esotericism were already developing before the fifth century AD. There is obviously no way of knowing for certain the content of Buddhaghosa's secret texts, but it is highly significant that the idea of such works was present and the very existence of the term could easily have been sufficient to open the door to an esoteric interpretation.

We may speculate that the content of these is likely to be similar to the meditation manual which was found in Central Asia and subsequently translated into German by Dieter Schlingloff.[19] Although this is presumably of (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin origin, it is very much based upon the application of visualization techniques to the traditional topics for meditation. It is not Mahāyānist, although it could be seen as tending towards the Mahāyāna.

Alexander Soper drew attention to various works preserved in Chinese with a similar orientation towards visualization.[20] For our present purposes it is significant that the *Apadāna*, a late canonical Pali work, already contains a marked tendency towards visualization.

Dhammapāla, closely followed by Sāriputta, the twelfth century commentator, explains Buddhaghosa's secret texts as: "Secret texts expound emptiness [and] are connected with the truths, the taking rebirth (*paṭisandhi*) of beings and [the law of] conditionality".[21] The mention of the taking rebirth of beings is interesting; in the *mahāṭīkā* to the *Visuddhimagga*, also attributed to Dhammapāla, we find reference to the other items but not to this. Instead Dhammapāla refers there to the item of *kammaṭṭhānaganthaṃ*.[22] Since the *ṭīkā* writers normally stay rather close to one another, this is likely to be a deliberate change. It may imply that he considered the notions of *kammaṭṭhāna* and taking rebirth of beings as equivalent in the context of 'secret texts'. It is tempting to suggest that he knew of an esoteric tradition of the *kammaṭṭhāna* (spiritual path,[23] in this context) concerned especially with the process of rebirth. The material discovered by Bizot could certainly be so described.[24]

If this tradition was known to Dhammapāla it perhaps tells us a little about its origins. Clearly it was accepted by him as orthodox, since he is prepared to connect it with the by then long-established notion of the 'secret texts' to be taught to the meditation pupil. Unfortunately the date and even the number of Dhammapālas is somewhat debatable.[25] Lily de Silva has, however, established that by the twelfth century a single Dhammapāla was believed to be the author of most of the works traditionally attributed to him.[26] H. Saddhātissa has advanced arguments which go far to identify the Dāṭhānāga mentioned in the introduction to the *mahāṭīkā* to the *Visuddhimagga* with a tenth century figure.[27] It is likely then that we are here dealing with a writer or writers of the late tenth century, probably based in South India rather than Ceylon, but in close contact with the Mahāvihāra tradition.

If such an interpretation did develop in Ceylon or South India, this would most probably have occurred as part of the general growth of tantric tendencies in Indian religion, as Bechert has suggested. Perhaps the most likely period for such a development in Ceylon would be between the sixth and the ninth centuries. At present this is definitely a possibility, but it is certainly not yet conclusively established.

Which of these five alternatives is correct ? I do not think this question can be answered at the present time. Indeed they are far from mutually exclusive. It is quite possible that present-day esoteric Buddhism contains ideas and practices deriving from more than one of these sources. Nevertheless it is certainly premature to assume that it has its origins in unorthodox circles.

Part Two

Nature of Esoteric Buddhism

In the second part of this paper I shall present some of the principal ideas of esoteric Buddhism as accessible at the present time. Let me begin with a quotation to set the tone.

> The tree grows as high as is *nibbāna*.
> Its roots of crystal
> number twenty six.
> Set with diamonds is the precious trunk
> which unfolds beyond
> the four continents.
> The first branches,
> like six marvellous stars,
> subdivide into nine smaller branches
> whose thick foliage
> very rarely
> withers.
> The upper branches,
> which number sixteen,
> with leaves that are
> close-set and evergreen,
> carry fruit that
> last long before they fall.
> The succeeding branches
> — there are nine most beautiful —
> are very thick [with foliage]
> of leaves, some old, some new,
> which, when their time has come,
> fall one by one.
> From the midst of the branching
> which separates many times
> in countless forkings
> come forth four healing branches,
> a permanent refuge
> which protects all beings.
> These are the four requisites (*paccaya*)
> of man today,
> the constant source of protection
> which spreads good fortune,
> happiness and success.
> They bear leaves, flowers and fruit
> which ripen and fall

in the network of the world,
and transform [on reaching] the ground
to bring about the birth of figtrees
which possess five branches.
An *indriya* [bird] keeps guard
upon each of these five branches
so as to devour human beings.
Such is the search for the crystal spheres, the fruits and flowers of the figtree.[28]

Here we meet already the search for the crystal sphere to be found in the figtree with five branches, i.e. our body with its five senses. This is somehow connected with a cosmic tree which extends beyond the four continents and reaches to *nibbāna*.

Perhaps this is enough to show already that this kind of Buddhist esotericism is about mapping worlds, both visible and invisible ones.[29] Indeed the wider context of which it reminds one is a type of mysticism which I shall call tantro-kabbalistic for the purposes of this article. By this I mean a form of mysticism which utilizes a rather elaborate map of correspondences between the human body, the cosmos and some kind of higher reality or knowledge. In the process it draws on the full resources of the widely-dispersed traditions of magic and the occult – letter, sound and number symbolism together with the use of structured patterns of shape or gesture. Often these are applied in ritual. Typically too this is linked with the spiritual practice of one of the higher religions in a manner which integrates the system of correspondences with a model of the spiritual path and with various modes of spiritual practice. I do not mean to imply that this form of mysticism is only to be found in the Jewish Kabbalah or in Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. Similar traditions are certainly to be found within Taoism and Islam, for example. I simply wish to take Tantra and the Classical Kabbalah as loosely paradigmatic. Needless to say, each such tradition has its own unique features.

Let me now try to illustrate some of the above features by means of quotations, mainly but not entirely, translated from the French of François Bizot.

1. *Correspondences with the body*

1. The fig-tree is first of all the trunk.
2. Its branches are the two arms and the two legs.
3. Its leaves are the two ears.
4. The flower of the fig-tree is the umbilical cord.
5. Its fruit is the child established in the womb.
6. Its roots are the three [parts][30] of the male sex organ which contain the generations to come – that is to say, the precious water which flows and gives birth in the realm with seven crystal walls. Hide so that no one may see.[31]

2. *Correspondence with the cosmos*

Herewith some passages taken from another text (with omissions):

> The land of the Rose-apple tree
> It is located to the south of holy Mount Sumeru. Around Mount Sumeru is situated first Mount Giri, then Mount Vulture Peak and lastly the seven ramparts of Mount Sevenfold Ring.
>
> Mount Sumeru
> In the five aggregates of our bodily form, our head is Mount Sumeru; our chest Mount Giri; our pelvis Mount Vulture Peak; the two knees, the two ankles and the two soles, the seven stages of Mount Sevenfold Ring, the ramparts of Mount Meru. The four lakes situated at the foot of Mount Sumeru are the four elements in our bodily form.
>
> The figtree
> The five aggregates of our form are called the figtree. That which grows up in the land of the Rose-apple tree is the two Children of the Heart[32] who are reborn in the maternal womb.[33]

Here we see the traditional geography centred on Mount Meru now linked to the system of correspondences. The form of the figtree, here and elsewhere associated with the five aggregates and the four (or five) elements, is used for this purpose.

Another passage:

> "O Children of the Heart! In that place there is a fig tree with each of its fruits concealing a precious crystal sphere. It casts a delicious scent over countless world spheres. This is the holy[34] Dhamma. The crystal sphere placed in the flowers of the fig tree – magnificent and glorious – this is the holy Buddha. The fig tree has four long branches, which extend in the four directions beyond the limits of the world sphere. Its roots extend downwards as far as the lightless Unending (*avīci*) hell. Its topmost spike reaches to the Great Brahma realm of the Eldest *devas*.[35]

In this second case the vertical cosmology of the heaven realms and hell worlds is made use of in a similar way.

3. *Correspondence with higher knowledge*

> A PĀ MA CU PA — this is the quintessence of the five books of the holy *Vinaya*.
>
> DI MAṂ SAṂ AṂ U[36] — this is the quintessence of the five books of the holy *Suttanta*.
>
> SAṂ VI DHĀ PU KA YA PA — this is the quintessence of the seven books of the holy *Abhidhamma*.

A is the holy *Ādikamma*; PĀ is the holy *Pācittiya*; MA is the holy *Mahāvagga*; CU is the holy *Cūlavagga*; PA is the holy *Parivāra*. These are the names of the holy *Vinaya*.

DI is the holy *Dīghanikāya*; MAṂ is the holy *Majjhimanikāya*; SAṂ is the holy *Saṃyuttanikāya*; AṂ is the holy *Aṅguttaranikāya*; U is the holy *Khuddakanikāya*. These are the names of the five books of the holy *Suttanta*.

SAṂ is the holy *Saṅgaṇī*; VI is the holy *Vibhaṅga*; DHĀ is the holy *Dhātukathā*; PU is the holy *Puggalapaññatti*; KA is the holy *Kathāvatthu*; YA is the holy *Yamaka*; PA is the holy *Mahāpaṭṭhāna*. These are the names of the seven books of the holy *Abhidhamma*.

MA — i.e. *passāsa*, breathing expels and draws in, first *jhāna*;[37]

A — i.e. *assāsa*, absence of breathing, second *jhāna*;

U — i.e. *nissāsa*, breathing expels, third *jhāna*.[38]

The connexion made now is with the constituent parts of the Pali Canon – the vehicle of the Buddha word itself. This can be, and is, linked to the idea of developing a *dhammakāya* or body of Dhamma.[39]

In the *Vimuttimaggadassana*, a Pali text preserved in Ceylon,[40] we have the syllables of *arahaṃ* linked with the three treasures (*ratana*) as follows:

A — Buddha RA — Saṅgha HAṂ — Dhamma.[41]

The same passage then goes on to relate *assāsa* to *Sutta-piṭaka*, *passāsa* to *Vinaya* and *nissāsa* to *Abhidhamma*.[42]

4. *Letter and number symbolism*

9. Add together the virtues of the mother and father, which makes thirty-three. This then is called the thirty-three letters which create all human beings.

10. Add the thirty-three letters to the five aggregates, and one obtains the thirty-eight virtues of the holy Dhamma. This is the holy Dhamma in person.

11. Take NA MO BU DDHĀ YA —

NA, the twelve virtues of the mother;
MO, the twenty-one virtues of the father;
BU, the six virtues of the king;
DDHĀ, the seven virtues of the family;
YA, the ten virtues of the teacher.

These are the five aggregates which give the fifty-six virtues of the holy Buddha. This is the holy Buddha in person.

12. Combine the three: *passāsa*, *assāsa* and *nissāsa*, with SAṂ VI DDHĀ PU KA YA PA and with the four elements NA MA A U. One obtains the fourteen virtues of the holy *saṅgha*. This is the holy *saṅgha* in person.
13. Adding all of these together gives 108.
14. This is found in our body.
15. This is that which all noble sons, all people, all men, must seek to find and understand completely clearly.[43]

Obviously this passage could be discussed at great length. For present purposes it suffices to note two aspects. Firstly the use of the number thirty-three seems to be deliberately intended to reinforce correspondences. It is of course the number of the deities in the second heaven (cp. also the Burmese thirty-seven Nats[44]) and seems to have led to the expansion of the traditional number for the parts of the body from thirty-two to thirty-three.[45] This is also connected to a version of the Pali alphabet with thirty-three letters. It could also be related to the thirty-two marks of a great man (*mahāpurisalakkhaṇa*).

Secondly the overall aim of the passage is to link the figtree to the virtues (*guṇa*) of the Triple Gem. To illustrate, fifty-six is the number of the syllables of the *itipiso*, often in fact referred to as the *Buddhaguṇa* – an extremely widely used formula in ritual, protective and meditative contexts. The overall figure of 108 is the commonest number of beads in a rosary as used in Southern Buddhism and indeed elsewhere. It may also have astrological links as it is the number of *pādas* in the yearly cycle.[46]

5. *Ritual*

It is difficult to select a short passage to convey adequately the ritual aspects of Southern Buddhist esotericism, since ritual texts tend not to be very readable as coherent pieces. Suffice it to say that chants and practices which derive from this tradition seem to be widespread at a popular level in Thailand and Cambodia and probably elsewhere. Elaborate forms of ritual are of course typical of traditional forms of Southern Buddhism. In the past they seem to have contained a strong esoteric element, although some of this has been removed as a result of recent reforms. Bizot has made a substantial study of the texts associated with one form of ritual performed for various purposes including the prolonging of life.[47]

6. *Application in daily life*

Whenever it is necessary to undertake a journey of some kind, take three strides. Crouch down on the heels and recite:

> "MA is the holy *Vinaya*; A is the holy *Abhidhamma*; U is the holy *Suttanta*.
>
> MA *dukkhaṃ — sivaṃ nibbānaṃ*.
>
> A *aniccaṃ — sotābbaṃ nibbānaṃ*.
>
> U *anattā — nirodhaṃ nibbānaṃ*."[48]
>
> Concentrate upon that. Fasten *nissāsa* in the heart. When *nissāsa* penetrates, one obtains cessation.[49]

This extract usefully demonstrates the thin line in this kind of religious tradition between spirituality and superstition. Note the use of syllables together with attributions to the *tipiṭaka*. The three syllables, although obviously related to the Vedic AUM = OṂ, are commonly derived in Thailand from a Pali stanza[50]:

> *Arahaṃ sammāsambuddho / Uttamadhammamajjhagū //*
>
> *Mahāsaṅghaṃ pabodheti / icc eva ratanattayaṃ //*

Yet we have here direct reference to the three signs (*anicca*, etc.) of insight meditation as well as to the embryonic breathing (*nissāsa*) of the esoteric tradition. This brings us to:

7. *Spiritual practice : meditation methods*

The meditation methods of Buddhist esotericism have a strongly *mantric* component, although breathing techniques and visualisation also have an important role. There has been a tendency in scholarship to regard the repetition of syllables and devotional phrases as something distinct from meditation: a kind of prayer or mechanical repetition. In fact it plays an enormous part in traditional Buddhist circles in all the Southern Buddhist countries, even in Burma where it would originally have been regarded as a type of *samatha* or calm meditation based upon concentration.[51]

This kind of meditation is found quite widely in use among lay devotees. Often it is no doubt rather minimalist, although in other cases it is something more serious. It is quite long-standing. As an illustration we can quote Robert Percival (in Ceylon from 1796–1800), who describes Buddhist monks: "To their girdles they wear suspended strings of beads made of a brownish or black wood; and mutter prayers as they go along".[52] (They are described as wearing the robe with the shoulder bare and carrying a painted cane in one hand with a palmleaf umbrella in the other.) Later on he describes the Ceylonese as wearing beads and muttering prayers "as they count them and go along the road".[53] He understands these as preventives against "the evil spirits which surround them".

> One who enters the order and honours the three robes, must apply himself to recollection of repugnance, to the ugly and the beautiful and perceive a

noble altar within as without. One who enters the order and honours virtue, must know the interior objects and observe the bodily postures (*iriyāpatha*) as the Lord has taught in his holy word. Within and without are entirely alike. If one receives *dāna* from a *dāyaka*, let there be enough requisites to correspond with the [different elements in the] womb of the holy mother. Then one will have followed the rules of the holy *Vinaya*.

All of you, brothers, pay heed. Let us reveal [what it is like] when one is in the place of the embryo, that is in the belly of the mother, for ten months – clinging to the umbilical cord of the holy mother, seated with the knees drawn up, the eyes closed, the mouth practising the holy syllables: NA KA AṂ. When one is expelled at birth, one is dazed, distraught, lost, unconscious. One seeks in vain to remember the three holy syllables. This is why the Lord has urged that one should prostrate oneself in order to practise the exterior holy syllables: A RA HAṂ. Those are the exterior things.

Prostrate oneself in order to practise as if residing in the womb. The Lord has one to fold the legs, set the right hand in the left hand and pronounce the syllables of the holy A RA HAṂ. If, for example, one prepares oneself to receive an offering, one must conform to the posture in the womb. If one receives the eight requisites,[54] the robes must conform to the objects of the noble altar as in the place of the embryo in the belly of the mother. Then one is in correspondance with the noble teaching. When one is established in the place of the embryo in the belly of the mother, one possesses all the objects. They are the colour of blood, red like a ball of gum resin (*gamboge*). One possesses all the objects in full. If in the place of the embryo in the belly of the mother, these objects are incomplete, our bodily form deteriorates and cannot grow.

All of you, brothers, pay heed. If, having entered the order in order to pay honour to *sīla* and to the precepts, you do not possess the seven pieces in full, the *sīla* and the virtues which you honour will deteriorate and then disappear.

Let us continue to reveal what exists within: the under-robe, the waist band, the cloaking robe (*cīvara*), the breast band, the inner robe (*sanghāti*), the sash, the stole. These are the seven elements. Know that they are the elements within. The waist band is the cord at the umbilicus. The breast band is the end which is attached [to the placenta]. The sash is the part which remains with the holy mother. The stole is the bag of waters which contains a little blood. The cloaking robe is the amnion (innermost membrane). The inner robe is the placental envelope. The under-robe is the pocket for excrement.

When the body is established in the womb of the excellent holy mother, the waters are above our head and flow continually drop by drop upon our bodily form. If this water does not irrigate our body, we cannot live. That is

why one must know the within and the without alike and must observe bodily postures in accordance with the laws of the within and the without. It must not have any colour there except red like a ball of blood. If another colour is mixed with it, the form cannot be born. If *sīla* and the precepts are not observed correctly, one decomposes like the body.[55]

Now we see a rather fuller exposition of some aspects of the assimilation of the process of gestation to the experiences of meditation. At the same time the environment of the embryo in the womb is compared to the seven items of the traditional dress of the Indo-Chinese Buddhist monk (now widely replaced by a simpler form of monastic clothing considered closer to the canonical model).

8. *Spiritual practice: the path*

The wind descends from the nose down to the neck. This then is called the holy *Vinaya* in five books. This is the path of the stream-enterer. The wind descends from the neck down to the chest.[56] This is the path of the once-returner. The wind descends from the chest down to the navel. This is the path of the never-returner. The wind descends from the navel down to the coccyx, without leaving or entering. This is the wind of the path of *arahat*ship.

He attains cessation. Concentrate your attention correctly and you find yourself as you were when you were inside your mother's womb. Do not let the wind leave or enter. Following these instructions is to invite the eightfold *ariya-saṅgha* [in order to enter the way to the attainment of cessation, by the four paths].

The wind descends from the nose down to the neck. Practise correctly and you will be able to contemplate the holy light that is like a firefly. This is called obtaining the fruit of stream-entry.

The wind descends from the neck down to the chest. Practise correctly and you will be able to contemplate the holy light that is like the morning star. This is called obtaining the fruit of the once-returner.

The wind descends from the chest down to the navel. Practise correctly and you will be able to contemplate the holy radiance that is like the full moon. This is called obtaining the fruit of the never-returner.

The wind descends from the navel down to the coccyx. Practise correctly and you will be able to contemplate the holy radiance that is like the rising sun. This is called obtaining the fruit of *arahat*ship.

One attains cessation. Leave cessation.

The breath leaves the coccyx and rises to the navel.

Practise correctly and you will be able to contemplate [the holy shimmering radiance that is like the splendour of the sun and moon].

> The breath leaves the navel and rises to the chest. Practise correctly and you will be able to contemplate the moon and the stars.
>
> The breath leaves the chest and rises to the neck. Practise correctly and you will be able to contemplate the holy radiance that is like the combined splendour of the sun, the moon and the stars.
>
> There appears a shining light which sparkles. One contemplates the ten gates. One contemplates truly the realm of *nibbāna*.
>
> The breath leaves the neck and rises up towards the fontanelle. Practise correctly and you will see the holy light that opens the gate to *nibbāna*.
>
> The mind, balanced and concentrated, should be kept like a hair belonging to an inhabitant of the continent of Western Goyāna. Then the mind will be able to enter into *nibbāna*, the peaceful and glorious realm of the highest happiness.[57]

This final passage should probably be considered as exemplifying another general feature of Tantric religious forms. It is quite typical of such traditions to utilize practices based upon the imitation of the higher spiritual states which are sought. In the Buddhist context this has often involved an attempt to mimic the *yuganaddha* quality of the transcendent (*lokuttara*) path i.e. the manner in which the experience of awakening (*bodhi*) unites and somehow harmonizes both the peaceful (*samatha*) and the insightful (*vipassanā*) aspects of Buddhist practice. The idea no doubt is that imitation can ultimately induce the relevant mental states. Similarly in visualisation practices the body of a Buddha is imitated by visualising the marks of the Great Man.

In the present context the aim is to imitate the various stages of the transcendent path (path of stream-entry and so on). By doing so, in a form of meditative ritual enactment, conditions are created which can lead the advanced meditator towards his goal.

Notes

1. Allchin, 1989, pp. 1–16; 1990, pp. 163–73.
2. Coningham and Allchin, 1992, p. 166; Deraniyagala, 1990, pp. 149–68.
3. Lucet, 1974; Janice Stargardt, 1990, (reviewed by K. R. Norman in *JRAS* (1992) pp. 114–17); Smith and Watson, 1979; Wales, 1969, p. 10f.; Allchin, 1989, pp. 1–16; Allchin, 1990, pp. 163–73.
4. This at least is the implication of the account by the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien. However, his contacts were with the Abhayagiri school and may therefore exaggerate its importance. In particular the strongholds of the supporters of the Mahāvihāra seem to have been in the south of the island and Fa-hsien may have been unaware of them or uninterested in up-country Buddhism. Similar considerations may apply to the seventh century account of Hsüan-tsang who does not seem to be aware of the existence of non-Mahāyānist Theravādins, except in Bengal and the Tamil country!

5. Holt, 1991. On the Mahāyāna in Ceylon, see also: Paranavitane, 1928, pp. 35–71; Mudiyanse 1967; Bechert, 1977, pp. 361–8; Dohanian, 1977; Ruelius, 1978, pp. 89–99; Norman, 1978, pp. 28–47; Schopen, 1982, pp. 100–108; Smith, 1987, pp. 257–78, and citing: Donanian, "Prolegomena to the Study of the Mahāyāna in Ancient Ceylon," in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture (Vivekananda Commemoration Volume)*.
6. e.g. Cp-a 276–332.
7. Guillon, 1985; Strong, 1992.
8. Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1988.
9. Bechert, 1995.
10. Mostly in later portions of the *tipiṭaka*, but we should note that there is a tendency to date material as late precisely because of the presence of such elements. There is an obvious danger of circularity here.
11. Strong, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
12. Preface to Bizot, 1988, p. 9.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 11–2.
14. There is one passage related to the *Vimuttimagga* of Upatissa, but it is uncertain whether this was a work of the Abhayagiri school or not. Indeed, even if it was, it may have been written at a date before there was significant doctrinal divergance from the Mahāvihāra.
15. Ps II 264 = Mp V 97; Vism 115. Dhammapāla's *Mahāṭīkā* explains the *Visuddhimagga* reference as: "*kammaṭṭhāna* texts which are profound and concerned with such [teachings as] the truths and conditioned arising or those which are connected with emptiness" (C[e] 1928: *gūḷhaṃ ganthan ti kammaṭṭhānaganthaṃ saccapaṭiccasamuppādādisahitaṃ gambhīraṃ, suññatāpaṭisaṃyuttaṃ vā*; (B[e] 1977: ... *ca*). Vism-sn is slightly different. Compare also Paṭis-a 674 which links several of these expressions: The 'secret meaning' (*attha*) or 'hidden goal' is the transcendent (*lokuttara*) 'because it is completely outside' (cf. Paṭis-gp).
16. Dhs-a 374 (mṭ: *gantho ti pāli*); Nidd-a I 112.
17. *The Secret Vesssantara, the Secret Vinaya, the Secret Ummagga*, etc. These and others constitute the 'counterfeit *saddhamma*'. The reference is probably to the early Mahāyāna in view of Spk-pṭ II (B[e] 1961) 171. See Sp I 232; IV 742; Sv II 566 (pṭ); Spk II 201; Mp III 160. According to Sāriputta's *ṭīkā* to the Vinaya (to Sp I 232), these are "*suttas* of the dwellers in the Mahāsaṅghika-nikāya".
18. So Adikaram, 1953 [1946], p. 97ff. and Bechert (cited in note 12 above), p. 11. A different view: Collins, 1990, p. 116f. n. 55. Collins correctly points out that *gūḷhattha*, 'hidden meaning', used at a much later date in the title of certain works (and at Paṭis ii 195), need not imply esotericism. However, Buddhaghosa refers to texts (*gantha*) as hidden or secret, not their meaning (*attha*).
19. Schlingloff, 1964.
20. Soper, 1959, Chapter III *Iconography*; cp. Kloppenborg and Poelmeyer, 1987, pp. 83–95; Beyer, 1977, pp. 329–40; Harrison, 1990.
21. Ps-pṭ II (B[e]) 168 ≠ Mp-ṭ (B[e] 1977) 369: *Dhammakathābandhan ti paveṇi-āgataṃ pakiṇṇaka-dhammakathāmaggaṃ. Saccasattappaṭisandhipaccayākārappaṭisaṃyuttaṃ suññatādīpanaṃ guḷhaganthaṃ.* Some editions of Ps and Ps-pṭ read *guyhaganthaṃ*, but this probably does not affect the sense.
22. Vism-sn has *kammasthāna(-)satya-*.
23. See my note on this topic in Hinnells, 1984, p. 179. The two senses of *kammaṭṭhāna* are distinguished clearly in Abhidh-s-mhṭ (N[e] 1965: 236); cp. mṭ to Vibh-a 263.
24. Bizot, 1976.
25. See Cousins, 1972; Pieris, 1978; Jackson, 1990. As I have pointed out in the introduction to Ñāṇamoli, *Dispeller of Delusion*, Vol. I, p. x, n. 3, Dhammapāla's commentary on the *Udāna* appears to cite the *anuṭīkā* to the *Katthāvatthu* commentary. This poses difficulties for the theory of two Dhammapālas, unless they are contemporaries in the tenth century (suggestion of P. Jackson in a letter dated 31.1.92). If there is an earlier Dhammapāla, author of various *aṭṭhakathās* to the *Khuddaka-nikāya*, he cannot be before the sixth century at the earliest.
26. Sv-pṭ I Introduction pp. li–lv.
27. Hammalawa Saddhātissa, 1965, p. 29.
28. Bizot, 1976, p. 117f.
29. An earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference of the Traditional Cosmology Society (Lampeter, 1992) on the theme of "Mapping Invisible Worlds."
30. The two testicles and the penis.

31. Bizot, 1980, p. 250.
32. Cittakumāra and Cittakumārī.
33. Bizot, 1976, p. 119f.
34. Here and below the honorific is rendered by 'holy'. This no doubt overstates the case, but is intended as a corrective to the common practice of not rendering honorifics in South-East Asian languages which underplays the reverential element in some forms of traditional Buddhism.
35. Bizot, 1976, p. 83. This was the first text translated from the Khmer by Bizot. A version of the same text in the northern Thai dialect of Lanna was discovered in 1983 with the title *Pavarabandha*. Other versions have subsequently been found. See the comparison in Lagirarde, 1994.
36. As Bizot points out, this should be KHU. He suggests that this occurs frequently because of the similarity of the writing of the two syllables. However, it may also have been due to a wish at some point to make the five syllables for *Vinaya* begin with A and the five for *Suttanta* end in U i.e. two of the three parts of MA A U.
37. Bizot points out that the normal rendering would be: *passāsa*, (i.e. *pasvāt*) breathes in; *assāsa* breathes out; *nissāsa*, absence of breathing.
38. Bizot, 1976, p. 101.
39. For bibliographic references, see: Reynolds, 1977.
40. On this text, see now: Bechert, 1989.
41. The beginning of T. W. Rhys Davids, *Yogāvacara's Manual*, London, 1896, p. 2 identifies the syllables of *arahaṃ* with the three *ratana* as follows:
    A — Dhamma RA — Buddha HAṂ — Saṃgha.
    This section is, however, missing in the Sinhalese edition given at the end of the *Vimuttimaggo* referred to above. Both the *Yogāvacara's Manual* and the *Vimuttimaggadassana* are texts of the same (still extant) South-East Asian meditation tradition which is now treated in some detail in Bizot, 1992.
42. 66b *A-kāro Buddha-ratanaṃ ra-kāro Dhammam uttamaṃ* |
    66c *haṃ Saṅghatthan ti yojetvā jāṇitabbaṃ visuṃ visuṃ.* | |
    67a *Assāso Suttapiṭakaṃ passāso Vinayaṃ tathā* |
    67b *nissāso Abhidhammo ti jānitabbaṃ visuṃ visuṃ.* | |
    (Ratanajoti and Ratanapāla, 1963, p. 114.) (uncorrected)
43. Bizot, 1980, p. 252.
44. There are of course thirty-seven chief deities present in the *sabhā* of the second heaven, as the Four Kings are present as guardians of the directions. See the important series of articles on this topic by Shorto, 1963, pp. 572–91; Shorto, 1967, pp. 127–41; Shorto, 1978, pp. 152–64.
45. The thirty second item of the later canonical sources – "the brain in the skull" – becomes two items, brain and skull.
46. Conveniently there are four *pādas* in a lunar mansion and nine in a sign of the zodiac; so the *pādas* could function to link the solar and lunar lists ($4 \times 27 = 108$; $9 \times 12 = 108$).
47. Bizot, 1981.
48. Perhaps translate: MA is suffering, but nibbāna is happy. A is impermanence, but nibbāna must be heeded. U is no-self, and nibbāna is cessation.
49. Bizot, 1976, p. 102.
50. A version of this stanza is the first two lines of the *Ratanattayappabhāvābhiyācanagāthā* ("Verses invoking the Power of the Triple Gem"), now attributed to King Mongkut. However, even if the attribution is correct, they could be older as this kind of Pali composition sometimes incorporates earlier stanzas of special importance. See e.g.: Anon, 1975, p. 121.
51. See Houtman, 1990.
52. Percival, 1975 [1805], p. 143.
53. *Ibid.* p. 150.
54. According to Bizot these are the seven items of monastic dress together with the bowl.
55. Bizot, 1980, pp. 244–47.
56. Lit. the xiphoid appendage.
57. Bizot, 1980, p. 248f.

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Buddhist Nuns in Transition: the Case of Burmese *Thilá-Shin*

Hiroko Kawanami, Lancaster University

Introduction

Despite the fact that the original lineage of the *bhikkhunī* Saṅgha has long since become extinct in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition, there has been an ever increasing number of female renouncers (nuns) who shave their heads and follow the lifestyle of religious ascetics, living on alms and observing the five, eight or ten Buddhist precepts.[1] These women are called *thilá-shin* (keepers of the precepts) in Burma, and similarly *mae ji* (female ascetics in white robes) in Thailand. In Sri Lanka, they were generally known as *upāsikā* (Buddhist laywomen), though a movement towards the ten precepts propagated by a group of female renunciants called *dasa sil mātāvo*[2] (mothers of the ten precepts) suggests a slight change in the status of Buddhist nuns.[3]

Technically speaking, these female renouncers, whom I shall call 'Buddhist nuns' for convenience, are not imbued with any special religious status in contemporary Buddhist societies. From an orthodox Buddhist point of view, they are in the same category as *upāsikā*, meaning 'pious laywomen'. Buddhist nuns themselves, however, strongly identify with the Buddhist community as far as their religious affiliation and mendicant lifestyle are concerned, but the monks generally discount their importance in everyday life by officially adhering to the doctrine that contemporary Buddhist nuns are nothing more than *upāsikā*. In this respect, the authority of Buddhist nuns has become diminished and they are downgraded in religious significance. The standing of Buddhist nuns is further denigrated by their association with the negative stereotype of the servile, tempting and worldly woman. Moreover, most Burmese think the nuns' major role is to serve the community of Buddhist monks.

This paper will focus primarily on *thilá-shin*, the Buddhist nuns in contemporary Burma.[4] I will explore their religious position, which is often treated by scholars as 'ambiguous', in order to assess where these Buddhist women actually stand in the light of the prevalent beliefs and symbolism, social reality and spirituality that surround them. In addition to that, it seems to me that their contemporary position is 'transitional', so I attempt to assess the direction in which changes are taking place. The opportunity for full ordination may be closed for *thilá-shin*, but the rising standards of their Buddhist education, success in Buddhist exams and the general recognition of their academic achievements seem to have contributed to a renewed awareness and confidence on the part of Burmese Buddhist nuns. The recent popularity among the urban middle-class of sending daughters to nunneries to become temporary nuns, also suggests a new kind of social appreciation and changing attitudes towards Buddhist nuns. This phenomenon indicates that there are channels other than the restoration of the *bhikkhunī* lineage that can be cultivated to allow Buddhist nuns to exert their religious influence and work towards establishing a more respected and secure religious itentity.

Studies on Women in Buddhism

A number of substantial works on the position and role of women have been produced, in the scholarly tradition of textual interpretation (Paul 1979, Falk 1980, Kajiyama 1982, Kabilsingh 1984, Schuster 1985, Murcott 1991). These scholars, mostly in the textual tradition, have followed the legacy of I. B. Horner (1930) and investigated the orthodox views and attitudes towards women as portrayed in the Buddhist literature. Although their works contain valuable descriptive sources of information, they are rather limited by dealing primarily with the portrayals of ancient nuns and laywomen in early Buddhist texts, or with the interpretation of female images in Mahāyāna Buddhist texts. Whilst Buddhist literature has provided valuable insight into the official position of women, the gap between the past and present, myth and reality, textual and sociological is yet to be overcome. Consequently, we are left with an obscure picture of 'female renouncers' who may have existed at various stages in the history of Buddhist monasticism.

In socio-anthropological work on Buddhist societies and monasticism, interest has centred primarily on the monks and their relationship with lay donors, in which the role of Buddhist women was accorded little significance (Spiro 1970, Tambiah 1970, Gombrich 1971, Bunnag 1973). It was only in the 1980's that scholars started attempting to understand the contemporary socio-religious reality of Buddhist women, of both nuns and laywomen. The work of scholars such as Cook 1981, Khin Thitsa 1983, Nissan 1984,

Bloss 1987, Havnevik 1989, Grimshaw 1992 and Bartholomeusz 1994 is finally catching up with the actual position of women in Buddhism.

There is also a growing interest and influence from feminist scholars who refer to the Buddhist religious tradition for an explanation of gender relations in Buddhist societies. Some of them criticise the religious tradition as the main culprit for limiting women's spirituality, and the radical work of Khin Thitsa (1980) openly criticises Buddhist values for degrading women to the 'realm of desire'. In the meanwhile, others say that Buddhist ideology has had little impact on the traditional beliefs and customs of a society to which Buddhism has failed to introduce its more egalitarian principles to the nature of gender relationships (Klein 1985). Kirsch (1985) has observed in Thailand that women are actually confined to 'more worldly' roles and economic activities due to the significance placed on merit-making and their tendency to lapse into such activities. Keyes (1984) has depicted the image of woman as 'mother-nurturer' from his study of popular Thai texts. A woman is more inclined to her 'nature'; which is essentially 'maternal', thus her primary religious duty will be to nurture the Saṅgha by providing her own son as novice. Gross (1993) suggests that women's options are limited, and there are low evaluations of their spiritual potential in Theravāda Buddhist societies. Mi Mi Khaing (1984), however, may not assent to her view, saying that, being a Burmese woman does not mean playing second fiddle. She sees women as influential and 'indispensable' in Burmese society, in which they complement their male partners, participate actively in every aspect of society, and support and maintain the whole religious system.

Restoration of the *Bhikkhunī* Saṅgha

In the face of these discussions, there are scholars and nuns (Ayya Khema, Gross, Lekse Tsomo) who have been active in their attempts to restore the *bhikkhunī* Saṅgha in the Theravāda tradition. Kabilsingh (1991), argues that the Theravāda lineage has continued till today in the Dharmagupta sect of the Mahāyāna tradition.[5] Therefore, just as the Sinhala *bhikkhunī* introduced full ordination to the Chinese nuns in 434 CE (Senaveratne: 107–8), it is possible to restore the *bhikkhunī* order in Theravāda Buddhist societies through the assistance of contemporary Chinese *bhikkhunī*.[6] In such an endeavour, they hope to raise the status of Buddhist nuns since the extinction of the *bhikkhunī* lineage has been the consistent explanation for their low religious status. In fact, although the reintroduction of the *bhikkhunī* order seems technically plausible, the religious authority, the Saṅgha, in Theravāda Buddhist countries is bound to disparage such a lineage as Mahāyāna, and therefore, see their tradition as inferior in its authenticity.[7] Accordingly, it seems unlikely that such movement will uplift

the consciousness of contemporary Buddhist nuns as most of them are receptive to the 'authoritative' view of the monks. Since their delicate religious position rests entirely in complying with the existent authority of the *bhikkhu* Saṅgha, it is unforeseeable that the Buddhist nuns themselves would be particularly instrumental in the restoration of the *bhikkhunī* Saṅgha, the movement of which may only be seen as an imposition of 'Western', thus foreign, ideas.[8]

Implicit Meanings

In the Buddhist teaching, it is well known that gender is ultimately irrelevant for one's higher spiritual pursuit. Thus being a woman is no barrier to enlightenment. This 'truth' is frequently remarked upon by Buddhist monks and learned scholars since divinity can be recognised in both sexes. Moreover, both men and women are bound to mortality and social conventions which are not perceived as the ultimate reality. When one attends the initiation ceremony of a *thilá-shin* in Burma, Burmese nuns chant the thirty-two parts of the physical body and bodily substances.[9] The parts of the body and bodily substances are listed one by one in order to remind the initiate of the transient nature of her physical existence. Their chant continues while her hair is shaved, "there is neither male nor female ... no one can escape the cycle of ageing, illness and death". In this context, gender is described as almost inconsequential for the ultimate spiritual attainment. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that this soteriological ideal is not borne out in social reality.

The social reality of these women hinges on the fundamental dualism inherent in traditional beliefs and religious symbolism. Feminist theologians in the Judao-Christian tradition, for example, have frequently criticised the body and soul dichotomy, the ideology of which has associated women with the physical realm of flesh in contrast to the spiritual supremacy associated with men. In their view, this ideology has led to the negative evaluation of women, thus historically relegating women to a symbolically 'inferior' position (Ruether 1972, Daly 1973). Among women, this dualism is further applied to separate their inherent nature between the seductive whore and the holy mother or obedient wife. Paul (1979) has described how women are either discredited or idealised according to the different contexts in Mahāyāna Buddhist texts. The female body has been treated as their weakness as well as their strength; a vessel to reproduce and cradle life as well as an instrument to tempt and corrupt the opposite sex.

In the Burmese context, there is a traditional belief that 'one is born into a woman due to one's bad karma or lack of sufficient amount of merit accumulated in previous lives'. In addition to that, Burmese women in general are referred to as the inferior sex because of their physical weakness.

> Men can go and meditate alone in the deep forest but women cannot do so because they are more likely to be attacked by bandits and 'bad spirits'. Women are weak-minded, easily frightened, dependent, prone to illness and vulnerable to spirits. In addition to all that, they lack the physical stamina to tolerate the severity of ascetic training.

Such was the response of Burmese male meditators when they were asked whether women could attain a higher spiritual stage similar to what they were striving for. Burmese Buddhists, furthermore, believe that women have more suffering, *dokkhá*,[10] than men because of their corporeal state of being which is suggested as inferior to that of men. The female body is regarded as a vessel to communicate physical and psychological suffering such as pain, agony, grief, labour and frustration. It is also perceived that women represent physical reproduction, being caught in the endless cycle of *thanthará* or *saṃsāra*, in opposition to men who can aim for the ultimate termination of rebirth. The reproductive power of women, which is essentially threatening, is denigrated by reference to the Buddhist ideology, as yet another beginning in the endless cycle of rebirth.

In contrast to the laypeople, monks and nuns are religious ascetics who have renounced their reproductive power and sexuality by their commitment to celibacy. Burmese nuns refer to themselves as having to suffer lesser *dokkhá* compared to laywomen who have little control over their own body. A laywoman in general is thought to endure all of the *aweiniká dokkhá ngà-ba* (five aspects of female suffering). These are 1. menstruation, 2. pregnancy, 3. childbirth, 4. separation from her parents, 5. having to attend her husband. Moreover, once a woman becomes a mother, she is considered to develop a strong *thanyàwzin*, which is a deep emotional attachment to her family and children. Burmese informants have often commented that everyone, both man and woman, has *thanyàwzin*, but the strongest feeling is experienced by a mother. Her *thanyàwzin* is appreciated by family members but is regarded as rather negative since it binds and confines her to a stronger degree of suffering. Thus the stronger the attachment is, the more the notion of *aneiksá* (impermanence) is stressed to counterbalance the burden of heavy emotions. The nuns have already left their parents and are not married, so they are at least spared four aspects of such female suffering, considered to be the cause of miseries and pain. The only burden they have to carry is the *dokkhá* of menstruation. *Thilá-shin* actually say that it is their good karma that they have chosen a chaste life, and now that they do not have to go through the pain of childbirth or tolerate a drunken husband. The moment a woman shaves off her hair, it implies that she has become celibate; in other words, she has taken full control of her own sexuality by giving it up altogether. This rejection of sex, rejection of reproduction, rejection of the endless cycle of rebirth, and rejection of suffering, come across as a powerful religious statement from the Burmese Buddhist nuns.

The Buddhist nuns have transcended what are perceived to be the fundamental limitations of womanhood and have embodied religious ideals. Yet they have left revered roles in society as mothers and wives; a rebellious act which will attract its own share of challenges in the form of criticism and suspicion from society and the religious authority. After all, female renouncers are not seen to be entirely relieved of their biological capabilities. Therefore, they are seen as implicitly dangerous, thus innately threatening to the spiritual ideal of Buddhist asceticism in the eyes of the monks. Consequently, these women are seen as challenging the existing order and disrupting the religious and ideological division between physical women and spiritual men by their very presence in the monastic community. The social and moral pressure of their ambivalent position manifests itself in various ways. Most nuns admitted to praying, sometime in their career, to be reborn as a male person, hopefully a monk, in their next life.

Informal Power

In order to fully comprehend where Buddhist nuns stand and the actual roles they fulfil, we have to look at the informal power they exert in everyday monastic life. I have suggested that their lack of formal religious status and the attribution of negative images do not necessarily imply that the nuns are treated as inferior and downgraded in their daily activities. On the contrary, *thilá-shin* have a strong presence in Burma,[11] in which they take initiatives, make decisions, and exert considerable influence in their relationship to the monks and to the lay devotees. Some of the roles they actively engage in help distance the holy monks from secular forces. The nuns tell the lay visitors where to take off their shoes, how to prostrate themselves in front of the monks and how to use religious honorifics properly, and by doing so, make sure that the sanctity of the monks is well maintained. The nuns' identity thus rests with the monastic community of the monks, and they are enthusiastic about policing the boundary and protecting it from corrupting influences. Such functioning as a buffer zone is probably facilitated by their ambiguous religious position, or it may be the result of their standing between the religious and the secular. However, their ultimate motivation behind such role-playing has to be fully explored if we are to truly understand what they are trying to achieve.

One of the ways that *thilá-shin* make themselves useful is through the handling of money. As the *Vinaya* prohibits the monks from the handling of money or fire, the nuns make themselves almost indispensable to the monks in these areas. These functions give Buddhist nuns a certain level of influence as they often come to be in charge of the kitchen and monastery finances. It is common for them to welcome lay visitors, look after young novices, organise ceremonies and in many cases, take an active part in

running the monasteries. However, it has to be pointed out that such economic power does not imbue them with any more power in the religious domain. In other words, the ability to handle money is regarded as opposite to the spiritual potency which carries the highest prestige. This ability, therefore, assures the nuns of lower rather than higher prestige, and forces them to take money, the 'hot substance', full of worldly pollution on behalf of the monks who do not touch it. This ability adds to the perception that they are 'too attached' to the secular world: in other words, spiritually inferior.

Yet the majority of *thilá-shin* are more than keen to offer help and serve the monks in their belief that they are accumulating spiritual merit. Such activities involve various kinds of menial work and domestic chores, such as cooking, cleaning and attending the Sangha. All such services are regarded as meritorious and good for their moral balance, but it is generally accepted that merit-making activities are inferior to meditation and textual learning to which true Buddhist renouncers should aspire. Buddhist nuns play the symbolic role of daughter to the Buddha, and symbolic mother to the monks. It is a plausible way in which female renouncers pursue their religious goals within culturally valorised roles. Having said that, it is ironic that Buddhist nuns who have left their families and renounced the traditional roles of mother and wife, should lapse into a similar domestic situation and even find it their major *raison d'être* to serve yet another set of dependants, the monks.[12] Buddhist nuns, however, are in the front-line as the most pious among faithful devotees who uphold the religious tradition. They are keen on altruistic self sacrifice and virtuous acts for the monks, and simultaneously they are easily influenced by the monks since such acts of devotion and loyalty provide them with a secure religious identity. Yet this may all be an expression of their insecurity in the religious domain. In other words, it may be their lack of formal religious standing that obliges the nuns to handle money on behalf of the monks, and by acting as minder to the monks and the monastic community as a whole, the Buddhist nuns are trapped between the secular and the religious world.

Religious Roles

As far as the religious roles and functions of *thilá-shin* are concerned, they act as important ritual specialists, educators and propagators of Buddhism. Officially, however, most important ritual roles such as officiating at religious ceremonies are closed to the nuns.[13] When the monks officiate, their role accords with the superior religious status of the Sangha. The nuns, being competent ritual specialists equipped with detailed knowledge of every ceremonial procedure, complement the monks in Buddhist ceremonies. They normally sit in front of the lay congregation facing the monks, firstly in their position as the front-line of the pious, and secondly as

ritual specialists. The ceremony only starts when the nuns invoke the monks by initiating the mandatory prayer glorifying the 'Three Jewels': the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha. After the prayer, the chief monk starts the ceremony. The monks and nuns remain in ritual dialogue throughout the ceremony, at times in verbal acknowledgement or by using bodily gestures such as nodding or prostrating themselves towards the monks, which occur at the end of each prayer sequence or at small intervals of the sermon. Symbolically, the monks give and the nuns receive on behalf of the laity, by which act they lead the whole congregation. By knowing every detail of the ceremonial sequence, the nuns facilitate and make sure that the ceremony is completed without inconvenience. Having noted the nature of their actual role in a ceremonial situation, it has to be mentioned that it is not technically impossible for a nun to officiate. This involves the giving out or the conferring of the five or eight precepts as well as the reciting of major *payeik*[14] prayers in the Pāli language. The problem does not seem to concern the ability of the religious person concerned so much as her religious status and official qualifications.[15] If a *thilá-shin* were asked to conduct a Buddhist ceremony, it is most likely that she would refuse for the simple reason that it implied a major public performance. In this respect, it seems to me that the issue is about social approval for granting more religious authority to women, and this depends on whether the monks, laity and the nuns themselves are willing to accept such a precedent. On this point, Burmese people expressed apprehension about allowing important ceremonies to be handled by nuns who observed only eight precepts (ten at the most). The monks obviously displayed their displeasure at such an unacceptable suggestion, and the nuns themselves, whose primary interest rests in consolidating their existing authority by upholding the sanctity of the monks, seemed perplexed by such a possibility.

Preaching is another area of religious importance. A Buddhist nun, in theory, is not obstructed from preaching on the grounds of being a woman. But despite stories of famous female preachers in ancient Buddhism,[16] the incidence of contemporary Buddhist nuns preaching in public is still rare. In a country like Burma where the media is not highly developed, preaching is a powerful way of communicating and popular monk preachers attract large crowds, exerting considerable influence on their audience. In Sri Lanka, it is reported that many nun preachers such as Sister Sudharma are becoming accepted. The increase in number of these nuns show that they are moving into areas which have "always been a male prerogative" (Gombrich & Obeyesekere: p. 285).[17] Compared with Sri Lankan nuns, preaching nuns in Burma have not made their way in public.[18] Having said that, *thilá-shin* are actually keen on the idea of preaching and propagating Buddhist teachings. The notion of *thathana-pyu*, meaning 'to spread the religion', appeals to them as one of the most meritorious deeds. However, actual preaching takes place mostly in informal and private settings: inside the confinement of nunneries

and in people's houses. They preach to villagers during tours where village girls who have few options other than getting married and bearing children are persuaded to join the monastic community. *Thilá-shin* also visit prisons and preach to female criminals, or go to hospitals to console the patients, but these are limited activities in restricted circumstances. Most learned nuns are experienced at public speech since oration is part of their religious training. They are an enthusiastic audience of the monks' sermons, well-versed and knowledgeable, with a good number of Buddhist anecdotes to draw from. So again, they are well qualified to propagate the Buddhist teachings to the general public. However, most of them are reticent as the idea of preaching in public, especially in front of a large audience, is seen as a male prerogative. Furthermore, the nuns' first and utmost concern will be that such public display of lack of modesty may taint the purity of their self image. And such exceedingly bold behaviour can even jeopardise their relationship with many of their lay donors on whom they are completely dependent. Some said, "a nun must be modest and shy. It is bad for a woman to be bold". And most of them agree that "it is the role of the monks to preach". Thus, most Burmese nuns whom I interviewed were not willing to risk their prudent image and challenge socio-religious conventions lest they should undergo unpleasant experiences in public, which they anticipated might happen, and lose the support of their lay donors. In this respect, personal merit such as educational qualifications, which is becoming increasingly important in contributing to improve the religious standing of the nuns, is yet to show its influence in the people's perception of the nuns or in their general image. However, such changes may be on their way.

Education as an Asset

In Burma, where Buddhist education was traditionally promoted and encouraged by the kings, the state support of monastic higher education remained until the present and has upheld the standards of Buddhist learning among the monks and nuns. There were periods under the British rule when national exams were suspended, but by the end of the 19th century, annual Buddhist exams were officially reinstated, continued until 1941 and then resumed in 1946. The intervention of the government in setting academic standards to maintain the quality of Buddhist teachers and standardising text books, as well as the notion of having their religious knowledge examined, met with a degree of resentment from some quarters of the Saṅgha. However, advantages brought about by achieving degrees awarded by the government and a strong tradition of learning in the Saṅgha counterbalanced any such hostility. This was combined with a reward system[19] which gave grants and prizes to successful students and therefore provided them with strong incentives to study the Buddhist texts

(Mendelson, 1975, pp. 250–2). It is in this historical background that Buddhist nuns have been given the opportunity to show their ability and competence by learning the Buddhist scriptures.[20]

Around the turn of this century, Buddhist nuns were first given permission to sit for the state exams. When the first nun passed the national exams in 1915 with flying colours, more were encouraged to compete. An increasing number of nuns studied for exams despite hardship and obstacles. By 1947, the first nun from Sagaing passed the *Damasaríyá*[21] exams (Nandámala Ven, 1980, p. 160), and since then the desire to establish oneself as a *Damasaríyá* degree teacher has become one of the primary motivations for a Burmese Buddhist nun. Nowadays *thilá-shin* are allowed to sit up to the fifth level in the national exams.[22] If she passes up to *Patama-gyì* (advanced level), which is the fourth level, she is qualified to teach the Buddhist scriptures and start her own nunnery. When she passes the final exam and is given a *Damasaríyá* title, she is granted not only an official credential to teach but also prestige and a general acknowledgement of her religious worth.[23]

The pursuit of higher education, however, has not been an easy path for the nuns since there were customs and conventions that discouraged them. There were also procedural problems. It was assumed that all candidates were resident students of the institution, monastery or nunnery, from which they were presented to the examinations and that they pursued their studies under lecturers residing in the same institution. Many nuns, however, whilst residing in their nunneries had to commute long distance to receive tutelage from learned monks (Mendelson, *ibid.*, pp. 250–1). Besides, there were not many monks who agreed to teach the nuns, or even if they did, nuns were confined to the back of the classroom or to the other side of the curtain so that they remained invisible in the eyes of the monks. The hardship and disadvantage endured by them were hardly acknowledged. They were not given special financial support for their study and books were hard to come by. The biggest hindrance came from the monks who refused to give them tuition at all, declaring that nuns should be satisfied with the basic prayers. In their quest for learning, nuns in the pre-war period sought out learned 'ex-monks' (*hpòngyì ludwet*) who had left the Buddhist Order, and studied under their tutelage.[24] In the post-war period, there were more monks who came to accept the need to educate the nuns. In this context, Musàwyin Hsadaw, a highly respected abbot in Mandalay, who had been conferred the title *Agga Maha Pandita Maha Thera* (Monk of the Highest Learning), played an important role. He was also politically influential as a member of the Supreme Sangha Council during the U Nu regime in the 1950s. He publicly stated his support for the uplift of the standard of education for the Burmese nuns. Since then, many senior nuns commented that the Sangha and society have become much more supportive towards their education.

In contrast to what one may achieve in *patípattí* (meditation), the level of achievement in *paríyattí* (learning the scriptures) can be easily recognised since the distinction between those who are learned and those who are not is clear. The results of private and state exams are openly discussed, awards are given to the students with honours and lay donors give support to those who have achieved better degrees. As far as academic qualifications are concerned, it must be emphasised that they are gender-neutral and provide both monks and nuns with special channels to acquire regular patronage and to upgrade their careers in the religious community. As more *thilá-shin* emerge as teachers and scholars, their contribution to Buddhist scholarship in areas of literature, scriptures, treatises, commentaries, philosophy and Pāli studies, has become widely acknowledged. Consequently, the rise of the nuns' educational standards and contribution have not only helped to upgrade their socio-religious status, but also had a positive effect on people's previously ambivalent attitudes towards Buddhist nuns.

Alongside changes in general attitudes and more positive images of Buddhist nuns emerging, one of the curious social phenomena is the growing popularity among urban middle-class girls to shave their heads and take temporary ordination. The 'temporary' status for a Buddhist nun or a monk is referred to as *dúlábá*. All Burmese Buddhist boys become *dúlábá*, or temporary novice monks, at least once in their lifetime but it was never common until recently for girls to become nuns even for a temporary period. Whilst the experience as a monk is highly prestigious, a similar experience as a nun has not been seen as a means of acquiring equivalent respect and reward.[25] However, the recent phenomenon seems to suggest an apparent change in the general perception of Buddhist nuns. Nowadays, nunneries in Yangon and Mandalay are crowded during the summer holidays by freshly shaven young nuns between the ages of five and twenty. They go through an initiation ceremony and take the eight precepts which oblige them to fast daily after midday and to abstain from sex, alcohol and other kinds of worldly pleasure. They also have to live as alms collectors and experience the hardship and humility of being at the mercy of people's goodwill. The duration of their nunhood is arbitrary as it depends on the convenience of every temporary nun, but an average period will be between a week and ten days. Although few of them actually stay on to become permanent nuns, their basic aspirations are different. Most of the girls I interviewed emphasised that it was their own decision to become temporary nuns and their aim was to acquire spiritual merit. As it has become almost fashionable to become a temporary nun in Yangon, the phenomenon presents a noteworthy shift from the traditional negative image of old kin-less women living on charity and in poverty, to a new glamorous image of young Buddhist teachers exemplifying spiritual purity and religious worth.

Towards Higher Spirituality

The Buddhist nuns maintain their ambiguous position by juggling two identities, one secular and the other religious. Their lack of formal religious status may well foster a sense of insecurity, but there is an attempt to overcome this by creating an image of piety, purity and spiritual worthiness in their capacity as 'pious laywomen'. One possible new direction for their religious standing may be found in the movement towards taking the ten precepts, as in the case of in Sri Lanka. The *dasa sil matāvo* are prominent teachers in *vipassanā* meditation who strive for moral purity and observe precepts which free them from the handling of money and mundane matters. Bloss has suggested that they are neither a part of the Saṅgha nor a lay order, but their final aim is to become *arahat* (1987, p. 18). Schuster-Barnes notes that their movement has earned much respect for these women as true renunciants (1994, p. 154). Unlike *dasa sil matāvo,* Burmese *thilá-shin*, who are mostly eight precept observers, do not aim to detach themselves from the mundane realm. It has been mentioned that mediation between the secular world and the Saṅgha is an essential part of their religious identity and it will not serve their interests to become marginalised in their quest for more religious influence. But the mediating role through which the nuns seek empowerment, particularly in the handling of money, also limits their prestige and worth as renouncers. So if they are given the chance, most of them would probably opt for becoming ten precept observers. At present, there are about six ten precept nuns in Burma who are much respected and considered to be higher than ordinary eight precept nuns on the spiritual ladder. Most of the eight precept abiding nuns cannot afford to become ten precept observers, but they still make a point of not going on alms and refraining from cash transactions on days of rest, or designating a special day or a length of time during which they can become part-time ten precept observers.[26] By doing so, they attempt to achieve a higher spiritual state of detachment and tranquillity. In their quest for higher spirituality, however, it is difficult to anticipate the Burmese nuns becoming independent of the monks or from their immediate kinship ties. We have seen how merged their identity was in the actual running of the monastic community. The nuns derive their status from association with the monks and from the part they play in enabling the monks to separate from the worldly. Therefore, equality and independence may not be an attractive proposition for them but rather threatening and confusing to their basic sense of religious identity.

It seems to me that the most plausible direction for the strengthening of the nuns' religious position is in the area of Buddhist education. Renewed religious awareness and confidence, and the growing popularity of temporary nuns may suggest increased opportunities and increasing respect and

recognition for the nuns' religious position. Education for them has become their 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1977). The rising academic standards of the nuns may allow them to secure a higher and more equal position in the religious domain without becoming marginalised or treated as 'anomalies'.

Notes

1. Five precepts observed by lay Buddhists:
   1. Abstention from killing.
   2. Abstention from stealing.
   3. Abstention from adultery (sexual misdemeanours).
   4. Abstention from telling falsehoods.
   5. Abstention from the taking intoxicants (alcohol and drugs).

   Eight precepts observed by Buddhist nuns and laypeople while taking special vows: precepts 1, 2, 4, 5, are the same as above.
   3. Celibacy.
   6. Abstention from taking solid food after midday.
   7. Abstention from dancing, singing, music and shows, from garlands, perfumes, cosmetics and adornments.
   8. Abstention from sleeping on high and luxurious beds.

   Ten precepts observed by Buddhist nuns: precepts 1 to 8 are the same as above.
   9. The sending of loving kindness to all sentient beings (strictly speaking, this is not a precept. I have described it elsewhere (1990, p. 24)).
   10. Abstention from handling gold and silver (money).
2. Bloss, 1987.
3. In the late 1980s, there is said to be more than 25,000 full-time Buddhist nuns in Burma, 8,000 to 10,000 in Thailand and 5,000 in Sri Lanka.
4. Burma officially changed its name to the Union of Myanmar in June 1989. The capital Rangoon became Yangon. For this paper, however, I do not adopt the Burmanisation of place-names since it only changes the English spelling and the pronunciation remains the same in Burmese.
5. Gombrich & Obeyesekere confirm that the differences in the two traditions "have no bearing on monastic traditions" since they concern only the doctrine (1988, p. 274).
6. Dr H. Gunatillaka who visited China in 1985 to study the Chinese *bhikkhunī* order claimed that contemporary Chinese *bhikkhunī* follow the same rules and regulations prescribed in the Dharmagupta *Vinaya*: 8 *Pārājika*, 8 *Saṅgha-disesa*, 17 *Nissagiya*, 30 *Pācittiya* and 7 *Adhikarana Samatha* prescribed in the Theravāda *bhikkhunī Vinaya* (Daily News of Sri Lanka, 14 September 1989). The Theravāda has 166 *Pātimokkha* rules for *bhikkhunī* while the Dharmagupta has an additional 12 in the section of minor offenses, making the total 178.
7. Ven. Vorami is the first Thai nun to have received full ordination as *bhikkhunī* in the Chinese Dharmagupta lineage. She is, however, only a *mae ji* to the general public. "To the Thai Sangha, her status is at best that of a Mahāyāna *bhikkhunī*" (Kabilsingh, 1991, p. 52).
8. See Nissan, 1984, p. 45.
9. The chant is called *thonze-hnik ko-hkanda*, literally meaning, 'thirty-two parts of the body' in Burmese. It is recited in the Pāli language, which starts from *kesa* (hair) and ends in *mutta* (urine).
10. *Dokkhá* is a Burmese-Pāli word commonly used in colloquial Burmese meaning *dukkha* (suffering) as in the Pāli language.
11. I am referring to the Buddhist community of Sagaing Hills in Upper Burma, in which approximately 10,000 monks, novices and nuns live side by side.
12. Having said that, not all nuns engage in domestic chores all the time. The nuns who teach and learn are usually exempt from menial work.
13. Although the monks are seen to be the officiaters of rituals due to their superior religious position, there are no regulations to prohibit the nuns from officiating.
14. *Parittā*.

15. In theory, it is conceded that those who keep more precepts can confer to those whose status implies fewer. I have witnessed a young novice, a ten precept abider, officiate and confer five precepts to the lay audience. If that is acceptable, it should also be posssible for a Buddhist nun, an eight precept abider, to perform the same role.
16. Early Buddhism has produced many nun preachers, out of whom 'Dhammadinna' is the most well-known (Altekar, 1978, p. 209).
17. One educated nun, Ma Vicari, gave 2,530 public sermons in twenty years (*ibid.*, p. 281).
18. *Thilá-shin* Daw Yusanda is one of the rare Buddhist nuns who preaches at the Shweidagon Pagoda in Yangon. She has been preaching during the Buddhist Lent, July to October, for almost twenty years. Her topics mainly concern the social behaviour of women, morality and other general religious themes. She attracts a wide audience but the majority of them are women and children.
19. In the post-war period, apart from national exams conducted by the Burmese Government, an increasing number of local townships and private Buddhist associations have become active in organising Buddhist exams.
20. In Thailand nuns learn ordinary chants in the vernacular form, the same as that uttered by the lay congregation. Thai nuns have little access to the Buddhist knowledge which is believed to endow monks with magical powers.
21. The term means, the teacher of the Buddha's *Dhamma*, the highest level of Pāli scholarship or the name of the examination.
22. The five levels are *Mula-dàn* (elementary level), *Patama-nge* (lower level), *Patama-lá* (middle level), *Patama-gyì* (advanced level) and *Damasaríyá*. Buddhist texts such as *Dhammapada*, *Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha* (a twelfth-century Sinhalese compendium of *Abhidhamma* philosophy known as *Thingyo* in Burma) and sections of the *Vinaya* (depending on the level being taught) are essential for all levels. *Dhātukathā* (the third book of the *Abhidhamma*) is taught from the second level, Burmese grammar at all levels and Pāli grammar from the third level onwards. At the *Patama-gyì* level, the study becomes much more difficult as students have to tackle the hardest book of the *Abhidhamma*, *Patthana Kusalatika*. At the *Damasaríyá* level, they study *Parajika-kanda*, *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (Mendelson 1975, Appendix G, Report of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Burmese Gov. 1990).
23. There are more than two hundred nuns who hold the *Damasaríyá* title in the Buddhist community of Sagaing alone. Sagaing has a population of about 3,000 nuns which is about one tenth of the total nun population in the whole of Burma.
24. In the autobiography of Daw Malayi, it is described how she went with other nuns to live in the village of a famous ex-monk, Htayanga Hsaya-gyì, and attended his intensive lectures. He was one of the most learned monks at that time who had disrobed due to political intrigues. He spared much of his time and knowledge for the nuns and devoted his later life to improving their education, so he later came to be called 'father of the nuns' education' in Burma.
25. An exception was reported from the Tenassarim Division of Lower Burma where it was traditionally compulsory for girls from Buddhist families to become nuns temporarily while boys became novices in the *shinbyú* ceremony (1986, Beik-myò thathana-yei hnin, Beik-myò thilá-shin-mya. *Myá Mingala*, 6: 27–8, 66–7).
26. As far as the taking of the ten precepts is concerned, in Thailand, Kabilsingh (1991) reports that there were female renunciants called *silacarini* who observed the ten precepts at Wat Chanasongkram (Bangkok) in the 1960s. She also mentions *sikhamat* who are the ten precept nuns at Santi Asoke's ordained community. The practice is often combined with vegetarianism, both of which the practitioners see as a move towards higher spirituality.

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Note on Contributors

Dermot Killingley

Dermot Killingley was born in Liverpool in 1935. He studied Latin, Greek and Sanskrit at Oxford, and later studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. He has taught Sanskrit and Indian Culture at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, and is now Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, where he runs an annual seminar on the Sanskrit Tradition in the Modern World.

He is interested in the Sanskrit tradition and its interaction with modern India and the modern world, and his publications in this field include *Rammohun Roy in Hindu and Christian Tradition* (The Teape Lectures 1990), Newcastle upon Tyne, Grevatt & Grevatt, 1993, and *Hindu Ritual and Society* (with Werner Menski and Shirley Firth), Newcastle upon Tyne, Grevatt & Grevatt, 1991. He is also interested in the presentation of Hinduism in religious education, and has written a book for teachers, *Approaches to Hinduism* (with Robert Jackson), London, John Murray, 1988. He has written a descriptive sketch for linguists, *Sanskrit* (with Siew-Yue Killingley), Munich, Lincom Europa, 1995, and his teaching book, *Beginning Sanskrit*, is to appear shortly from the same publisher.

Peter Connolly

Peter Connolly studied for his BA, MA, and Ph.D. degrees in Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster. Since 1980 he has held a post as Lecturer in Religious Studies at the Chichester Institute of Higher Education, Chichester, England. His recent publications include *Vitalistic Thought in India* (1992), *Buddhism* (1992), "Phenomenological exegesis and Patanjalis Yoga Sutra" in Masefield P. and Wiebe D. (eds.) *Aspects of Religion: essays in honour of Ninian Smart* (1993) and "Hypnotic dimensions or religious worldviews" *diskus Vol 3*, No. 1, 1995. Dr Connolly's current research is mainly focused on the hypnotic aspects of a range of religious experiences.

Mark Allon

Mark Allon first studied fine art in Sydney, majoring in drawing, lithography and sculpture. He took an Honours degree in the languages of Buddhist texts and in Western philosophy at the Australian University, Canberra, translating the Buddhist Sankrit *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* for his Honours thesis. He completed his Ph.D. in Buddhist Studies at the University of Cambridge in 1994, and since then has taught and worked as a research assistant at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. He is currently involved in the publication and indexing of the collected papers of John Brough. He will soon take up a Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai Fellowship.

Sally Mellick Cutler

Sally Mellick Cutler was born in Australia in 1957. She moved to the UK in 1979 and began her first formal study in the field in Indology at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London in 1982. In 1994 she obtained a D.Phil. from Oxford University and was blessed with a son. She lives in Oxford where she is the manager of the Pali Text Society Office.

Lynn Thomas

Lynn Thomas is lecturer in Hinduism at the Roehampton Institute, London. She received a BA and MA from the University of Lancaster and a D. Phil from the University of Oxford in 1987 for a thesis on theories of cosmic time in the *Mahabharata*. Her publications include articles on various aspects of this topic and other research interests include the portrayal of women in Hindu and Greek mythology.

David Smith

David Smith teaches South Asian Religion and Art at Lancaster University. A Sanskritist by training, he has published *Ratnākara's Haravijaya: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Court Epic* (OUP, 1985), and *The Dance of Śiva: Religion, Art and Poetry in South India* (CUP, 1996). He has visited South India many times, and is currently writing a book on South Indian Temple Painting.

Anthony Tribe

Anthony Tribe received his doctorate in Classical Indian Buddhism from the University of Oxford in 1995 and is currently teaching in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Montana.

Robert Mayer

Robert Mayer received his Ph.D. from the University of Leiden in the Netherlands. His special interests are ideas of canonicity in Tibetan Buddhism, and the Ancient Tonga (rNying-na-pa).

Theodore Gabriel

Dr Theodore Gabriel was born in Badagara, Kerala State, India. He did postgraduate work in Social Sciences in the department of Religious Studies and Sociology at the University of Aberdeen and took his M.Litt in 1982 and Ph.D. in 1986, studying under Professor Andrew Walls. He taught Islamic Studies at the University for one year and later on moved to the College of St Paul and St Mary (Now Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education), Cheltenham, as Lecturer in Religious Studies where he continues to teach Islam and Indian Religions.
Dr Gabriel's research interests are in the area of Islam in South and Southeast Asia, Hinduism in South India, tribal religions and inter-religious relations. His book on the Muslims of Lakshadweep came out in 1989. Two more books will be published shortly, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in North Malabar 1498–1947* (E. Mellen Press) and *Christian-Muslim Relations in Sarawak, East Malaysia* (Ashgate Publishing House). He has also contributed several articles to academic journals in India and the United Kingdom.

Gavin Flood

Gavin Flood teaches in the Theology and Religious Studies Department, University of Wales, Lampeter. He has published a number of articles and two books including *An Introduction to Hinduism* (CUP, 1996).

L. S. Cousins

L. S. Cousins — formely Senior Lecturer in Comparative Religion at the University of Manchester, where he taught various courses on Buddhism and also one on Mysticism and others at different times on various topics connected with Indian religion, including Jainism and Pali. Educated at St John's College, University of Cambridge (History and Oriental Studies). Author of the chapter on Buddhism in: J. R. Hinnells, *Handbook of Living Religions*, Penguin/Viking, 1984 (revised and enlarged version to appear in 1996) and of around twenty articles on Buddhist meditation, the history of the early Buddhist schools and Abhidhamma. Co-editor of two felicitation volumes, an Index volume and a two volume translation — all work connected in some way with the Pali Text Society.

Hiroko Kawanami

Hiroko Kawanami completed her undergraduate studies at Sophia University in Tokyo and received her Ph.D. (1991) in social anthropology from London School of Economics. She has done extensive fieldwork on Buddhist practices in Burma, Thailand and Chittagong (Bangladesh). During her first fieldwork in Burma, she stayed as a Buddhist nun for 16 months. Her interest focus on gender and Buddhism and new Buddhist movements in Southeast Asia. She is currently lecturer at the Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University.

Sue Hamilton

Sue Hamilton is lecturer in Indian Religions at King's College London. Having taken an M.Phil in Classical Indian Religion at Oxford University, she went on to do a D.Phil in early Buddhism. Her thesis was published in 1996 by Luzac Oriental entitled *Identity and Experience: the Constitution of the Human Being according to Early Buddhism.* She is currently working on a book about the philosophical implications of the use of metaphor in the Buddha's teachings. She is Hon. Secretary of the Pali Text Society.